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Extraordinary life of unconventional Alfonso Yuchengco

JOB
Success has its rewards. Realize your true potential

Visioning not edible, but dreams can come true for RP

By Yuli Customio

ACTIVITIES in pursuit of the "Pygmalion IQ fest" may just be what the Philippines needs to achieve the dreams inspired by the People Power phenomenon.

And we, that's not just psychobabble. The way one not-totally-uchelessi Filipino sees

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, PEARLESS VIEWS

Cockpit is first structure to rise in ravaged town

By Tonesa Olaque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO — Three months after typhoons and landslides ripped out the heart of this quake-ravaged city, the first

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POPE RALLIES

But for 1st time in 26 years an aide will do Sunday Angelus blessing

THE HOMETOWN of Pope John II, Wadowice in Poland, holds a special Mass for his speedy recovery. The Pontiff was rushed to the hospital on Thursday only 14 days after his discharge hence prompting hospitalization fan. Catholics the world over are on their knees in prayer for their well-loved leader. a/1

VATICAN CITY—For the first time in his 26-year pontificate, Pope John Paul II will leave an aide to perform his traditional Sunday Angelus blessing while the bed-ridden Pontiff, who has bounced back from numerous health scares, will follow the ceremony from his hospital bed, the Vatican announced.

The papal blessing will be performed on the name of John Paul II by Argentine Archbishop Leonardo Sandri in front of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls said.

"The Holy Father's text and the usual recitation of the Angelus will be read tomorrow, Sunday 27 February, by the deputy secretary of state, archbishop Leonardo Sandri, at 12 o'clock in St. Peter's Square," according to a statement from Navarro-Valls.

At the same time, it will be Monsignor Sandri who will lead the Marian prayer and pronounce — for the Pope's name — the Apostolic blessing to the faithful present with Mary's.

"The Holy Father will join in reciting the Angelus from his room in the (adjoining) apartment," the statement added.

Navarro-Valls said the Pope's decision to not appear in public appearances, the Pope's failure to perform the traditional blessing will be seen by Catholics around the world as a sign that his condition had worsened. (See related story on Page A18.)

The ailing Pope, who will be 85 in May, is currently breathing through a hole in his throat from a tracheostomy on Thursday, which has left him unable to speak and dependent on written messages as his only means of communication.

Medical experts and Vatican insiders alike have blamed John Paul II's relapse — given his usual determination to put on a public appearances, the Pope's failure to perform the traditional blessing will be seen by Catholics around the world as a sign that his condition had worsened. (See related story on Page A18.)

The ailing Pope, who will be 85 in May, is currently breathing through a hole in his throat from a tracheostomy on Thursday, which has left him unable to speak and dependent on written messages as his only means of communication.

Medical experts and Vatican insiders alike have blamed John Paul II's relapse to part on his appearance at his open hospital window, exposed to the winter chill, during his earlier hospitalization this month.

"It seemed that the Holy Father was better after his first hospitalization but all the warnings he took part in, and then the Angelus ... maybe it was all too premature," said Board Prassnik, a longtime friend of the Pope.

During his last stay at Gemelli hospital, the Pope appeared at the window of his specially-equipped suite to greet the

story a/1

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS
The annual Panaderos Boulevard festival is ongoing down Session Road in Baguio City so summer now and all that the country's summer capital is also a garden of delights. Dancing in the streets on Saturday are pretty young things bearing the city's signature bloom, the everlasting. Today's calendar of festivities includes a parade of flora/floats.

RP AS JEWISH REFUGE

3 reunions give tribute, love, thanks to Filipinos

By Manuel L. Quezon III

FOR 70 HOT days in February, the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, was clean over the Philippines. Not just one, but three reunions took place on the weekend of Feb. 11 to 13, 2005.

The first reunion involved the Frieder family, a prominent Jewish-American family with roots in Cincinnati but now with descendants in New York, Texas, Washington and elsewhere.

The second reunion involved a group that called itself the "Islanders," refugees from the Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany who found a new home in the Philippines, thanks to the help of the Frieders.

And, finally there were the Filipinos like myself, representing our country one of the few that opened its doors to the Jews while the world closed its shutters to escape Nazi tyranny.

The weekend, in fact, had a theme: "Reunion in the Philippines. Refuge from the Holocaust." It was organized and planned by the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education, and established by the Jewish Institute of Religion of the Hebrew Union College, itself the oldest Jewish college in the United States.

The organizers hoped to find Filipinos who had been directly aware of the Holocaust. How the Frieder family which owned a cigar factory in Manila, had sought the help of Filipino leaders, in particular President Manuel Quezon, and the manner by which the Philippines answered humanity's call.

For the Frieders, the weekend was a chance for the elder and younger generations of the family to be introduced about, and to be thanked, for their ancestors' efforts. The weekend also was a chance for the survivors of the Nazi persecution—and Japanese occupation during the Liberation of Manila—to thank the Frieders and the Filipino people.

The weekend began with Sabbath evening services on Friday, Feb. 11th, which happened

| story/ a/2

Man searches for his 'Holocaust' brothers

By Daniel H. Dixon
Guardian

AS I AM about to turn 70, an unexpected surprise came my way after a fruitless search spanning 45 years.

Thanks to the Japanese army, "Jewish refugees Samuel & brothers, Filipinos" (published Feb. 8, 2005), memories of 1946 came to mind, dimly lately at first then they came rushing vividly. The faces of my Grade 6 classmates came into view.

Still quite clear to me was the day Crispin David, my classroom teacher at the Holy Family Academy in Angeles City, Pampanga, introduced to the class our new classmate named Gerhard Heidemann, a boy from East Germany and his younger brother, Manfred Heidemann, who was taller in the Grade 5 classroom on the second floor.

Gerhard was probably about 13 and spoke very little English; I recall his immediately open and reserved disposition. He performed so well in class and was an ace at soccer, my favorite sport, in no time.

The Holy Family Academy was operated by German Catholic nuns of the Benedictine Order and they were mostly natives of the German Catholic province of Baviera. All the nuns in the school were pure-blooded Germans. From the nuns, the teachers, to the janitor down to the cook. So one can see what it was like

MAN SEARCHES/ a/2

Gutsy Garchi: Big loss SC never knew

By Armand N. Nocum

TO SOME colleagues, Francis Garchitorena would have made a good member of the Supreme Court but his name of independence—a trait that also spurred him to stand up to a dictator—ruined his chances.

Excellency, like most personnel who had served under him, he was not a man to be roused by much bosses.

"He was a maverick jurist. He was his own man. They could not lead him by the nose, as he was not appointed to the Supreme Court," recalls Dante Jugsong said of the late Sandiganbayan presiding justice, who died of cancer on Friday night.

In a telephone interview, Jugsong described Garchitorena as "knowledgeable (about the law), principled and unimpeachable"—a man who could have stretched the Supreme Court had he been given a chance to serve (or he could've) high rollers.

The former senator recalled the high court (he allegedly "exercising a non-existent power" to determine who would fill up vacant positions in the Supreme Court).

"They want to have an member someone they can get along with," he said.

Jugsong, who once served as one of the lawyers of ousted President Joseph Estrada, had crossed swords with the high tribunal on issues affecting his famous client.

Jugsong called the late justice "Gutsy Garchi" and a "pioneer" in the fight against Marcos.

"During the martial law years, when it was dangerous, he was there," he said. "He was one of the many heroes of the struggle."

Jugsong recalled that he and Garchitorena were young private practitioners when they lost support to three legal stalwarts—the late Senators Lorenzo Tañada and Jose W. Diokno and current Sen. Joker Arroyo—who took on flak for declaring martial law in 1972.

"They were the leaders, we were the foot soldiers," he said.

Jugsong said he "biggest regret" was not accompanying Garchitorena's spouse call during the last pastoral holidays because he was busy with the Estrada and other cases.

"It seemed one he was already saying goodbye ... that he had premonitions of mortality," said Jugsong.

In all his 67 years, Gutsy Garchi, he said, never

FRANCIS GARCHITORENA: Plumbline here always his own man. Principled. No one could bend him by the nose.

PHOTO/ a/2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2013
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Ex-Reds 'radicalizing' Muslims

By Pia Zamora

EX-COMMUNIST rebels who converted to Islam are providing the "ideology" that has "radicalized" a small group of Islamic converts, including one suspected of involvement in the Valentine's Day bombings, according to an Inquirer source for a Muslim empowerment organization.

The source, a key Muslim who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the ex-rebels were seen as their ally and were "giving directions to Angelo 'Brimbol' and the other younger converts." Trinidad was arrested early last week along with Ismail "Tepay" Baharon in connection with the bus explosion in Makati City.

"You only see the young converts, like Trinidad, but there are older people behind them..." the source said, adding:

"[The converts] have imported the fervor of the [New People's Army] and adopted it in their outside-ideology."

But Prof. Tomas Ledesma, spokesperson of the Rebb Islam Party Congress, said that while ex-Islamic based on current reasons were possible, there were still "great differences" between Islam and the BIM, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

For one, the Islamic principle of sharing one's wealth with the less fortunate—or zakat (alms)—is "mandatory," Ledesma said.

Training camp

The Inquirer source said he met the supposed ex-NPA rebels at a meeting in Central Luzon late in 2012, after police raided an alleged terrorist training camp in Anda, Pangasinan.

The source said the meeting had been called to address the reported links of Rebb Islam to terrorism, but that "nothing" came out of the discussions.

During the raid, Trinidad and five other Islamic converts were arrested for illegal possession of firearms.

They were released on bail and other Muslim converts, like Ledesma, protested the arrest and accused the raiders of planting evidence, like the explosive ammo which were presented in court—but which did not appear in the post raid list of confiscated items.

New faith

On the other hand, Prof. Abhoo Syed Lingga, chair of the Institute of Bangsa Moro Studies and the Bangsa Moro People's Consultative Assembly, expressed doubt about the militancy of Islamic converts.

"They are more concerned about theological issues and about defending their new faith. I still have to meet a convert who will go into political issues," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview from Cotabato City.

Lingga said political issues were the concern of Nur Misuari, "because of their struggle to regain their homeland in Mindanao."

"It was only Hadjerin Guiamlen who said that Rebb Islam is radical," he said, recalling the former national security adviser's statement just before the May 2004 elections.

Lingga said Rebb Islam was just a term (coined by Filipinos of other religions who had turned to Islam. "Para sa amin, welcome to join us. There is no discrimination," he said.

Lingga made news in May 2004 when he was barred at the Ninoy Aquino airport while on his way to a Libyan mission sponsored forum in New York.

In September last year, Lingga missed the flight from LA to Bangkok after United Airlines authorities barred him again, apparently because he is a Muslim.

He had fulfilled a speaking engagement in LA upon the invitation of the Islamic Society and the Institute of Peace, and was on his way to Bangkok for another appointment when he was stopped at the airport.

SOUTHERN Philippines military commander Lt. Gen. Alberto Bragas (2nd from left) and Brig. Gen. Agustin Demusis (left) read a copy in the captured Abu Sayyaf camp in Indanan in 2007. The camp of the al-Qaida-linked group was captured by government forces following a military offensive where 18 Abu Sayyaf members were killed.

Pool hall owner tags 2 customers

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THE OWNER of a billiard hall in Tagaytay City where a series of bombs exploded on seven islands last Friday has pointed to two customers as being the ones who left the bag containing the explosives in his shop.

Joseph Dada, the shop owner, surrendered after police nagged him as a possible suspect and he would soon be a witness, said Supt. Antonio Reyes, the Tagaytay City chief of police.

"The shop owner finally admitted that he knew the person who left the bag in his place last 8th (2)," said Reyes.

Reyes said Dada told him that he had gone into billing because he feared for his life.

"He claimed that the pair were regular customers in his hall," Reyes said.

He said police were now hunting the suspects that Dada had identified and that an arrest was imminent.

Police found 30 to 35 kilograms of pyrotechnic powder stuffed in a steel can, two kilograms of TNT and 90 blasting caps in a black backpack in Dada's billiard hall located at Block 5, Lot 3, Phase 1 Enclaved Personnel Housing, in Western Batangas.

The explosives, which police officials said were powerful enough to level two five-story buildings, were found just hours before the start of the celebrations to mark the 15th anniversary of the first People Power Revolution at Edsa.

Authorities are investigating if the explosives, which had not yet been assembled into a bomb, were meant to be use in the Valentine's Day bombing in Makati or to disrupt the Edsa rites.

Military forges 'informal' truce with MNLF faction

By Alvin Pago

TACLOBAN has reached an informal truce with a Muslim rebel group, allowing troops to concentrate on pursuing al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf extremists, an official said Saturday.

Ben Loong, the governor of Jolo, told government officials he helped broker the agreement with Muslim leader Habier Malik, who backed Moro National Liberation Front forces from uprooting an Abu outlaw this month.

"We cannot say it's a ceasefire but we call it a gentlemen's talk between the Armed Forces and the [MNLF]," Loong said.

Malik, a loyal follower of jailed MNLF founder Nur Misuari, led about 200 MNLF fighters supported by the Abu Sayyaf in attacks on military outposts in Jolo on Feb. 5, triggering fighting that claimed the lives of 25 soldiers and almost 70 rebels.

More than 27,000 people fled their homes due to the clashes.

Although Malik's base in the jungles outside Patikul—town had been captured and his forces dispersed, the fugitive adopted leader continued to battle with many of his armed followers still at large.

Loong said he was able to contact Malik, with both sides agreeing to refrain from attacking each other.

The government has been sending down on the Abu Sayyaf after a spokesperson of the group claimed responsibility for nine mixed-terrorist bombings in Manila and the southern cities of Isabela and Davao on Feb. 14 which killed as many as 12 people and injured some 100 others.

The Abu Sayyaf said the Feb. 14 bombings were in retaliation for the attacks on Malik's forces.

However, officials said Malik and other MNLF commanders had kept their distance from the Abu Sayyaf although some of the lower-ranking fighters had united headlines.

Meanwhile, military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Bonisole said the military was sending down operations in Jolo after it dispersed members of the Abu Sayyaf and the Ajhigar Group kidnapping group.

"We are continuing the town of operations [of] soldiers in Patikul, limiting troop movements where we feel the threat of the ASG and the MNLF is imminent," Bonisole said.

"We have softened our guard to break the backbone of the ASG and the MNLF. They have been broken down into smaller groups and we have the capability to run after them in some where they are avoiding any engagement with our troops," he added.

Troop movement in Sulu, Bonisole explained, would be at the discretion of ground commanders in the area, who include Joint Task Group Sulu Chief Brig. Gen. Agustin Demusis and Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Bragas.

Bonisole also said a large part of Sulu where fighting raged for the past two weeks had been "cleared."

"Those areas have been cleared and people can now return to their homes. I would also like to assure our brothers in Sulu that the AFP will help in addressing the problem of evacuees and ensuring the flow of relief goods," he said.

With AFP

Duterte: Big names coming out in Valentine's bombing

DAVAO CITY—The names of some prominent personalities have been cropping up in the investigation into last Valentine's Day bombings, according to Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

"There are really big names, but I can't divulge it to you so as not to jeopardize our investigation," Duterte told reporters here.

At least 12 people died while more than 100 others were injured when homemade bombs went off almost simultaneously in Makati, General Santos City and the seaside terminal in Davao City last Feb. 14.

Duterte said the Davao suspects who were arrested for the Makati bombing "were just small ones."

The mayor, who is also the country's no-nonsense czar, described as a "fantasy" Cagayan de Oro City Mayor Vicente Emano's claim that the latter had advance knowledge of the Feb. 14 attacks.

"I had prior knowledge of the bombings. In fact, one cop and the city of Digos were included in their list, but I planned (with them) not to include our city. We'll remain headed on the ground, head-blood issues if however, Isabela resumed in pleading that our city be spared," the Inquirer Davao newspaper quoted Duterte as telling a Manila Radyo broadcast.

The paper also said that in yet another radio interview, Duterte had said that the 18 bombers were in Cagayan de Oro City and that he had spoken with them by phone.

Duterte said the Cagayan de Oro City mayor might have some explaining to do.

Davao City administrator Wendel Avisado said he had been informed that Emano had donated the report, claiming his remarks had been taken out of context.

The beanie incident failed to unite Visitors.

Davao Councilor Ulandadio Malaque said the city council would look into Emano's alleged statements.

"If proven that he really had prior knowledge of the bombings but did not do anything to prevent them, then he could be charged criminally as an accomplice," he said.

In Malaybalay City, authorities are under fire for a bomb drill that went out of hand, causing panic and some injuries.

The city police conducted the antiterror drill at the Notre Dame of Kidapawan College, a private school, but kept the information close to vest as if it is only a few people.

A phone call was placed to Rev. John Tan, the school director, about the supposed presidential bombing at the school.

Tan alerted the students and the students, but things went out of hand.

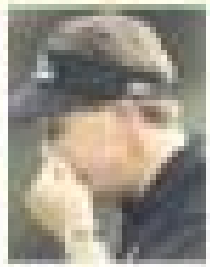
Elementary school pupils rushed to panic. Some students sustained minor injuries. Dr. Ostry S. Albada, acting M. Tupas and Agustin F. Zonio, PNS Mindanao bureau

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday SPORTS

WHAT'S INSIDE



Erratic Jenny hangs on with up-down 69

KAHUKU, Hawaii—Jennifer Rosales kept her frown on a day that was by turns windy, rainy and sunny, posting a three-under 69 to hang on to her two-shot lead after Friday's second round of the LPGA tournament at Turtle Bay Resort Golf Club.

Following a bogey-free first round, Rosales' second round effort was more erratic, but her nine-under total of 135 kept her in front of veterans Kelly Robbins, who had seven birdies to add for 137.

"The wind was the same [as yesterday]," said Rosales of the Philippines. "The first hole, I hit it too long and after that, it kind of got weird. I putted really terrible and missed a lot of putts, but I hung in there."

Rosales opened with a bogey but bounced back with a pair of birdies before dropping another shot at the fifth.

Rosales picked up two more birdies in the front nine before a crumbling toward two.

After bogeys at 14 and 17, Rosales carried the total two holes then birdied 18. She shared the round with three straight birdies to make something of the day.

"I made a bogey on 10 and a bogey on 11, the same [two] mistakes when," Rosales said. "I was getting frustrated, and that did not help at all.

"I was not in my swing so I told myself to give me a good feelings that I could start and I tried to hit a draw. It turned out 14 where I made a birdie. That kind of kept me going."

Rosales also was encouraged by the birdies, collecting those birdies after beginning with a bogey on 10—her only one of the round.

"I think I was drinking my caffeine [soda]," Rosales said. "I would put my coin points on and take them off. It would read go on a good, no [or all] gamewon and taking your time." Rosales did admit she rated Hawaii her to play continually.

"I thought to Hawaii when, it blows that it was a considered wind, but not there, there are some gusts," she said. "I hooked off some chips and putts. I remember one chip in particular because a big gust came through."

Cristie Kerr was three shots behind Rosales after a 68 for 138, and Hiaki Jones was four adrift after a 69 for 139.

Teenage amateur sensation Michelle Wie—playing in the first of her six sponsor's exemption tournaments on the LPGA this year—after two bogeys with four birdies for a 70 that pushed her more with Mexico's Lorena Ochoa and South Korean Soo-Nee Han, five shots off the pace.

"I wanted to be a better but shoots feel like maybe the winds are blowing today. I think four-under [through seven holes] is a good score," Wie said.

"I think I was playing a bit smarter today. Yesterday I think I was a little too aggressive and hitting up. Today, I went for more of the greens and the pin [less], and I think I did [better]."

AFP

CRAFTING JOBS. President Macapagal-Arroyo (third left) and an Ifugao weaving using a traditional tribal loom during a visit to the Multi-Purpose Loom Weaving Cooperative in Banaoang Village-at, Hingyon, Hilo-an Saturday. (STORY ON PAGE A2)

Militants see Danding hand in Luisita

By Norman Bordadora

MELIDAH farmers suspect that businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco may already be in control of the operations of the sprawling Hacienda Luisita sugar plantation in Tarlac.

Quoting sources in the management of Hacienda Luisita Inc., the peasant group Alyansa Mag-Iuhuhalo' ng Pilipinas yesterday said executives identified with Cojuangco had taken over the reins of the plantation recently as August last year.

"Danding's people prompted the recent turnovers of the 'Old Guard' workers because they were seen as the ones who would oppose the conversion of the estate and the consequent displacement of the more than 10,000 stockholders of the hacienda," said HSIP information officer Carl Ida.

But Ida's claims was denied by Hacienda Luisita.

Hacienda Luisita counsel Vigor Mendoza said the business that selling the plantation to Cojuangco had never been considered by the present owners.

"It was never considered, it was never on the radar screen," Mendoza told the business.

Mendoza branded the claim as propaganda by the unionized farm employees resisting to agitate them into strike by the farmers.

He said the reports came out after they declined the opposition of workers at the Central Azucarera de Tarlac.

He said the entry of Cojuangco into the picture would pave the way for the unionization of the hacienda, a land use conversion which is totally against the stock distribution agreement between the family of Don Pedro Cojuangco and the hacienda farmers.

Mendoza admitted there were plans to industrialize more areas in the hacienda as allowed by the law.

He, however, denied that Danding had a hand in the plan.

The hacienda farmers own over more than 30 percent of the hacienda under the stock option pursuant to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. Instead of land reform, Ida said, Danding's brother-in-law, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. being—had relinquished to majority hold of the hacienda to Danding.

"This is what we found. The former controlling interests in HLI had

COJUANGCO

available to the administration congressmen.

"Their park could go a long way [with the current budget]," Pimentel said.

This was not the first time the House leadership delayed the budgetary reconciliation meetings with the Senate. He said the same thing happened in 2003 when the House panel failed to show up at the bicameral conference.

"This is not the first time the Senate is playing hooky. They did it when they stalled the bud-

Pimentel: JDV to blame for budget delay

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel yesterday accused Speaker Jose de Venecia of being behind the impasse in Congress' deliberations on the 2005 national budget.

Since De Venecia continued to attack the bicameral conference on the budget, Pimentel said, the House leadership seemed to favor another reenactment of the 2005 budget in order for the administration congressmen to exercise continued control over funds.

"I hold Speaker Jose de Venecia responsible for the continued unenactment of the budget (deliberations)," Pimentel said in a broadcast interview yesterday.

"The budget is one big pork barrel. They want it reenacted so they will have more money to work with," he said.

The Senate minority leader said administration congressmen wanted the current national budget reenacted because it had so much pork allocations for the President. Funds controlled by Malacañang would ultimately be made

Correction

IN PHOTTAGE stories appearing in the issues of Feb. 25 and 26, the woman being sought by the police in connection with the kidnapping of a 7-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy was identified as Suzette See Hoang, based on information from police sources. Philippine National Police intelligence chief Director Robert Delfin said the woman listed in the PNP records in connection with the case was Suzette See Phang, not Hoang.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or wrong information, with address, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makati-Mandaluyong Bridge, Makati City; fax this to 897-8332; e-mail to <newsinfo@inquirer.com.ph>; and text to 0920-9-INQUIRER.

Corrections about how to process or objectively may be sent to either the ombud, readers' advocate, the news editor and the numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail addresses specified in publishing policy on page A6.

New round of absentee voters' listing set

By Jeremy Boling

THE COMMISSION on Elections will try to reach out to Filipinos in every part of the globe when it begins in October a new round of registration for overseas absentee voters.

Commissioner Florentino Tuason Jr., the head of Comelec's committee on overseas absentee voting, said the poll body now targeting one million new overseas Filipino voters for the 2007 midterm elections.

Filipinos abroad may apply for registration during the week-long Philippine embassies, consulates and other foreign service offices from Oct. 1, 2005 to Aug. 31, 2006.

The Comelec is this early scheduling not problems on OAV registration by adopting more efficient and less costly processes without sacrificing the integrity of the exercise.

Luis Barbers-daz, Tuason's assistant and a ex-host consultation with representatives from the foreign affairs and labor departments, congressmen, all committees on suffrage and election laws and migrant organizations to discuss the general instructions for OAV registration.

The Comelec said it would clarify some confusion and inconsistencies in the Republic Act No. 9189, or the OAV Law, to minimize delays, huge expenditures and "human errors."

Jeremy Boling

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website: www.lcm.edu.ph

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, February 27, 2005
2nd Sunday of Lent
1st Reading: Genesis 15:5-12

Praise flowing from the rock

In those days, the people hunted for water; there was grumbling against Moses. "Why did you make us leave Egypt to have us die of thirst with our children and our cattle?"

So Moses cried to Yahweh, "What shall I do with the people? They are almost ready to stone me!" Yahweh said to Moses, "Go ahead of the people and take with you the elders of Israel. Take with you the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing before you on the rock at Horeb. You will strike the rock and water will flow from it and the people will drink." Moses did this in the presence of the elders of Israel.

The place was called Massah and Meribah because of the complaints of the Israelites, who recited Yahweh saying, "Is Yahweh with us or not?"

2nd Reading: Romans 5:1-2,5-8

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts

Brothers and sisters, by faith we have received your righteousness, and we are at peace with God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Through him we obtain the favor in which we remain and we even boast in hope the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint us because the Holy Spirit has been given to us, pouring into our hearts the love of God.

Consider, moreover, the time: then Christ died for us, when we were still helpless and unable to do anything. Now would scarcely a man die for an upright person; although, for a very good person, perhaps someone might dare to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Gospel: John 4:5-30, 39-42, 39-42

Give me your living water

Jesus came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there. Tired from his journey, Jesus sat down by the well; it was about noon. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (At this time his disciples were gone into town to buy some food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan and a woman, for a drink?" (Jews do NOT associate or dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus replied, "If you only knew the Gift of God! If you knew who it is that asks you for a drink, you yourself would have asked me and I would have given you living water."

The woman answered, "Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where is your living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well after he drank from it himself, together with his sons and his cattle?"

Jesus said to her, "Those who drink of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water I shall give will never be thirsty for the water that I shall give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Give me this water, then I may never be thirsty and never have to come here to draw water."

The woman then said to him, "I see you are a prophet. Tell me this: Our fathers used to worship sacrificing to worship God; but you Jews, do you not claim that Jerusalem is the only place to worship GOD?"

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you shall worship the Father, but that hour is not the time to worship in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship without knowledge, while we Jews worship with knowledge, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for this is the kind of worshippers the Father wants. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah, that is the Christ, is coming; when he comes, he will tell us everything." And Jesus said, "I who am talking to you, I am he."

At that moment his disciples arrived (it was when they heard the woman, who declared, "He told me everything I did." So, when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more were believed because of his own words and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said; we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is the savior of the world."

Commentary:

The homily of water walking. The people cried in the desert and cry out against God and Moses. Moses is commanded to strike the rock and bring forth water and he obeys and the people are satisfied. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman, "Give me a drink" and a woman of Samaria comes to the well. She is questioned and led through the process of conversion, belief and knowledge of who Jesus is until she leaves her water jar at the well and goes home with the living water of the Word and Spirit within her. So she and many the town, because of the belief and powerful testimony she gives does he speak with Christ to go and be themselves personal experience of him to come to believe. Who are the people of the World Jesus relating we are? Be baptism, for the Word of God for the truth, for knowledge of Jesus, for community, for our God who loves the whole world? Do we still cry out against God and Moses, or are we still oblivious to the labors of God that is in our midst? Jesus, you thirst for us. Since our hearts and lives as they are, make some to encounter God to quench and truth with you. Amen.

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Favored Luisita ahead; Canlubang just 4 down

Manotoc takes PAL Interclub individual lead with 68

By Musong R. Castillo

MURCIA, Negros Occidental—Despite a bad back and all, Alex Montelibano charmed out an even-par 70 at Hidden Acres yesterday, boosting history-making Luisita to a precarious four-point lead over Canlubang with 18 holes to play in the senior championship division of the PAL Interclub.

The 54-point total led the Luisita 164-output for the day while the Sugar Barons trailed Tommy Manotoc's two-under 68, worth 36 points, in the lab and stayed on course to foiling the defending champions' aspirations for a six-peat in Municipal's centry.

Francisco Cuenco, another burning standout for Luisita, chipped in with 98 points, and Iggy Clarvalla and Richie Garcia signed for 106 to go with Benny De Guzman's 44 to complete the Luisita card.

Carlo Gamboa shot a 45 and did not count together with King Inandan's 42 and Tommy Jaworski's 39.

All but one

Manotoc, who wants to give up his spot to his regular teammate to a younger and promising player, hit all but the par-4 sixth green where he found the bunker and took his only bogey for the round.

The 53-year-old defending champion (aided a 12-foot sidewiper out on the par-3 16th for the lone birdie that complicated what he said was one of his "best competitive rounds in a while."

"Bam he declared stopping.

Luisita continuity to the general belief, is possible.

"There's a possibility," said Manotoc of Canlubang's chances. "But we have to play above our heads, get the team's last two scores up and then we'll see."

Rupe Alcántara, a mainstream in Canlubang, backed up Manotoc with a 31, but the Sugar Barons got such 56 scores from the rest with Rolly Tiney signing for a 47, Tony Oliva a 44 and Lito Magpantay a 43 to turn 240 tally.

The scores of Bing Batoy (41), Japanese Toshihiko Shiraishi (38) and Akiyoshi Miyazaki (37) were thrown away by the Sugar Barons, who will come into the final round seven up on third placed Alabang, which got 486 from Edwin Arrillo and Gilbert Martinez.

Butch Bendijo signed for a 46 to lead Southwoods to a 222 total and fourth spot, with Freddie Mendoza and Werner Dietz fine tuning screaming for 45s. Ben Ocido 49 and either of Gus Bautista and Ben Quiroz 50 completing.

Defender Chicago Golf (506) and MIG Golf (1148) brought up the rear in the Championship division.

Hawaiian charge

Hawaii PI Am came charging back from 20 points down to outwit the Sportsworld Division crown with a final day 226 and a 403 total, edging Camp Evangelista by one point over at the Mariquina layout in Bacolod.

Its 1206 spot with 177 at the start of the day (Jared PI Am kap-bagged to the top after getting 52 points from Mike Carrillo and 46 from Oscar Garcia. Ike Herman (47), Jessie Magadan (42) and Rich Santos (41) were the

CANLUBANG'S Tommy Manotoc nails his third and last birdie on No. 16 of the Bacolod Golf and Country Club.

NSAP head Benny Cayco of Riviera misses his putt on No. 3.

rounds other scorers.

Celia Kaseres scored 41 points to complete the 36-hole, which stood to seventh place at the start of the final round. Amy Medalla scored 42 points, Vic Amargoy contributed 42 and Boy Dolores and Jocelyn Serrano signed for 40s for foursgolfers.

Agamaldo 187.390), Philippine Navy 186-389, Marian Court 186-386, Eagle Ridge 197-382, Ang Tay Golf 192-379, Antonianos 187-379, Sienna 193-375 and San Jacinto 191-375, made up the final top 10 in the Sportsworlders Division.

Bautista ace

Meanwhile, Toto Bautista of Villamor scored the second ace of his career, hitting his 6-iron shot with a Titleist Pro V1 ball on the downhill 180-yard par-3 18th of Riviera.

He was a first-time, round-trip ticket to anywhere in the United States West Coast for his feat, according to Jess Enrile, assistant vice president for advertising and promotions of Philippine Airlines.

Incidentally, Bautista's an upland star of Villamor's 51 points and a 232 total for a four-point lead over Negros Occidental Golf Club at the start of founders division play.

Teddy Tejero was responsible for the second 51, while former WOSP secretary-general Fito Javier submitted a 46, Tristan Ochi had 44 and Villamor Girl Roberto Sabularse was good enough for a 40 that completed Villamor's total.

Which Bautista was in third with a 234, while Valley scored 16 fourth, four points back. Orchard was another 11 shots further adrift with 269.

Friendship leader

Friendship Division action, where Bataan's Apo Golf leads by two points over Mahaihai, took a break yesterday and will be concluded today at Riviera.

Dupont, MM-CDS International, Airbus, UE Aircraft Engines, Boeing, Honeywell International, Globe Platinum, Jury 923, Royal Caribbean International and Shangri-La Asia are the major sponsors of the annual tournament.

Fortune Tobacco, Rustic Mission, Nestreads, Premier Nissan and Spirits, Star Cruises and 98.5 Wheck are the corporate backers, with RJ Broadcasting Network, Century Park Hotel, Iron Brewery Inc., 7107 inc., Bombay Sheet, Air Philippines and Legend Hotel the minor sponsors.

Bustamante, Pagulayan forge clash of titans

By Marlon Bernardino
Cone Buzzer

FRANCISCO "Django" Bustamante buckled a third-ridden break to hammer out a decisive 11-4 victory over Grandy Valle, and Alex Pagulayan overcame Antonio Calma, 11-6, last night to set up a title clash in the P3-million Hope All-Filipino Billiards Open at the SM 13 Studio in Quezon City.

The race-to-15 championship match between two of the world's greatest pin masters will be played starting at 7:30 p.m. today.

The best 9 games of P500,000 will go to the winner of the first all-Filipino Open since 1992, when Jose Numog of Iloilo downed Eduardo Villanueva, 15-14, for the crown.

"I was just lucky," said Bustamante in Filipino. "I was despite having no-many breaks."

Valle, who knocked out Lee Chun Gomez, 9-5, Thursday night to enter the semifinals, failed to take advantage of Bustamante's miscues and crashed out despite draining five blood-after entering the leg.

Bustamante took the early four frames, and the only time the Dozo-raised Valle pounced on a mistake by his opponent was in the sixth frame, which he won as he cleared four 4-1.

But Bustamante pulled off back-to-back wins to make it 6-2, including an ace in the eighth frame that nerve despite a bonnie her flubbing a camera just as the pool icon

BUSTAMANTE. Error-prone escape.

knocked his break.

Valle never within 7-4, but Bustamante pedaled four straight frames to close out the win in the 11-minute break frames.

Pagulayan, the reigning world champion, made short work of Calma before zooming to a big 8-2 edge.

Although Calma relaxed the one-four racks to threaten at 8-6, Pagulayan put it all away by taking the next three racks with a flourish.

It was a disappointing defeat for Valle, whose earlier efforts had clinched for him a ticket to the billiard leg of the 2005 Asian Indoor Games in Singapore from May 4-6, alongside early qualifiers Gabriel Bautista and Elmo "Bata" Reyes.

Bustamante reached the semifinals after eliminating giant slayer Rodolfo "Boy Garrote" Cua with a convincing 9-4 triumph Thursday night. The Filipino Canadian said he learned his lessons well in a time in Hongkong.

"I thought I would lose against the way I lost in Chicago, where I had a big lead only to come up short in the end," Pagulayan said.

"I learned my lesson well."

The tournament, initiated by Hope Atone, Mark Champion, Manolito Cab Pura, Empredoor and Talk N' Text, is organized by Pepsi Sports boss Ariano "Nash" Pura and Arnulfo Silverio's promotion Mark Bustos, with Rolando Navarro as tourney director.

The champion will receive P300,000.

A world record for Nyoks

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

BACOLOD CITY—Despite his busy schedule in Congress as this city's representative, Monico "Nyoks" Puentevella still found time to take a break and grace the opening of the PAL Interclub Golf Championship on Thursday, February 24.

"I have always loved this tournament," he said. "It gives me great honor to be invited as one of its guests."

A buddy of mine for years now starting from the days when he was still a commissioner of the Philippine Sports Commission—a good guy, I must tell you—the good-natured congressman joined PAL president Jimmy Bautista, Interclub chair Domeng Daeste and other local honchos in the hitting of ceremonial balls Thursday at the Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club in Murcia. Applauding loudly after each shot Boyd gave PAL top guns Rafael Yabut, Jose Rancis and Eugene Labadan, among others.

Puentevella, who insists that I should call him Nyoks "as nothing has changed anyway, we are still buddies and it will remain that way forever," has made golf his game after being introduced to the sport.

"Golf, I finally realized, is a game that makes you a complete person," Nyoks said to me one time.

And I remember telling him, "Golf is for everybody. It can be played by a kid of five or anyone, including even aged 3-hundred and-plus."

He shot back: "Aha, there's a line in a song that says, 'If you can see me now, it's hundred and five.' We got another buddy."

Of course, Nyoks was referring to a famous Beatles ditty—you'll "Hang at Heat"?

Indeed, it's every golfer, golf is for the young at heart since how can an octogenarian be even a relatively fair play the game if he/she doesn't think young at the time?

I was not surprised that he knew the song. Nyoks was a former Young ng Tanglaban champion, the chief singing rival of Joe Bilas Chan when they were at the high school here.

I remember Nyoks telling me the first time he saw the Gangsters, their hit-singing premiere lodged him deliver his political rival. He was a **goosebumps, up against a powerful block, but** that didn't deter him from penning a child-hood dream: **Never do people.**

"You know what I did?" said Nyoks. "Even in my room to prison cells during the campaign trail, I always made it a point to also sing to people behind bars. My voice is a gift of God that I must share, whether one is rich or poor, young or old, educated or uneducated."

He said that Jimmy Bautista, the newly installed PAL president, is the friend from way back.

"For every chance that I'll be with him, I won't miss it," Nyoks said of Jimmy. "We've known each other for years. Jimmy's an angel."

Nyoks will attempt to do a world record on March 2, when he flies to Manila from here and then hopes to catch another plane that leaves for Istanbul 30 minutes after Nyoks' scheduled landing at the Nait. That schedule **suddenly stopped up when** Nyoks was informed PAGA would be here March 2.

"But it may have, we'll see. I have only after-day last night decided," Nyoks said.

The hurried trip is in line with his job as president of the country's weightlifting association.

"I need to catch that plane in Manila or I will miss the election of our new officers in Istanbul," he said.

Here's praying you won't miss your plane, Nyoks. I'm about sounding off Jimmy Bautista about the photo-finish thing regarding your trip! Jimmy can always do magic with IMG plans, right?

There's no truth to the drive to begin with.

***

BATHROOM: As always, Ayo Carmen, sales and services manager of PMI Manila Ticket Office, is busy manning the Media Center of the 56th PAL Interclub. As Bella Estrabillo's vice chair of PR and Publicity Committee, Ayo Carmen takes care of the needs of sportswriters and columnists and they don't come small at the said Media Center, thanks to Ramon Ilo, the house **committee chair of host Negros Occidental** Golf and Country Club in Mariquez. Of course, Jun Canton is ably handicapped by Rosie Dizon, administrative manager of NWG Corporate Communications in Manila. Former Canadian Chad Flores, Hoke Ord, Manila; Peter Mayhew, executive secretary corporate communications PAL Manila; staff photographer Bobby Tonson, Ito Hilo and Jonathan Geronimo, PALinx editorial consultant.

PMI confident of defending students' crown

By Marc Anthony Reyes

DUMAGUETE CITY—Philippine Maritime Institute, favored by the same team that captured the title last year, is confident of keeping the Juniors crown against a bunch of rival squads from all over the country when the Interscholastic Students basketball championship starts here today.

The Infantes, who have University of Perpetual Help-Dalta System in Laguna City for last year's crown, arrived here two days ago, well ahead of host-weights the University of Santo Tomas, which will come to put yesterday.

"It's going to be a war," said PMI coach Diosdado Santiago. "We have prepared for this long and hard because we want to win again."

While PMI opponents' arrival to the week, UST just brought in its "combination of brain A and B," according to coach Bel Mendez, who added that the Tigers' 4-foot-9 sensation, among them Jerbal Nicanor, are busy with their studies.

The Tigers, who are in the process of rebuilding after a dismal season which place thirds in the Under-16 division last year, have been in the MCB elimination last month.

Dalaran Institute of Technology, behind Institute of Technology University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos and host Silliman University will be the main contenders from the South in the 56-year-old tournament being held here for the first time.

Junior division defending champion San Beda will also see action, while Ateneo de Manila leads the teams competing in the women's division in the absence of Lyceum.

The host Cebu Pacific Air Interclub Cup, last month Ateneo de Manila and they can't be seen on their classes.

More than 600 athletes and officials converged here for the tourney with Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz and Dumaguete City Mayor Agustin Perdices formally welcoming the 23 senior, 17 junior and seven women's teams.

They will join a parade starting at the Quezon Park before heading to the Lamberto Macias Gym where the games start at 10:30 a.m.

Visioning not edible...

Encouraged by the economic and civil society leader Dick Pascua (who is First World cognitive, top corporations and successful people have, interestingly or otherwise, engage in various "visioning" of what they want their nation to be like—and eventually achieve that desired future.

"The Philippines is known all over the world for its most powerful People Power multifacilitation that toppled two major governments. But it has missed the opportunity to make the phenomenal a people empowered societal revolution that would truly change Philippine society for the better," Pedro, a retiree of the 2003 Right Livelihood Award (also known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize"), told the banquet.

He challenged the "visioning" committee that the project cannot run statutes or positive images of the future. "And yet, he said, "many studies have shown that human beings express their most positive things symbolic and mental processes, the products of which are ideas and images of the future."

According to Pedro, "we swallow so self-defeating images in many areas of our life, so our behavior tends to follow these images."

Focus on accomplishments

To counter the abundance of reports on growing corruption in the government, the increasing number of anxious Filipino mothers, etc., the images of "visioning" should focus on "accomplishments and pro-active" responses to these problems, he said.

Pedro went into specifics: "The only way to overcome poverty of a dam area, for example, can be measured by one or two housing projects put up by one group. Rejection of the 2000 phenomenon can be countered by mass-democratic non-bombastic action to transform the Estrada regime up to barangay through anti-Estrada, or professionals going back to the province."

"If, he said, "we should not ignore the realities around us," still, "many business and doers of the past underestimated the powers of image to create the future, which we are either destined to realize if based on self-defeating images or are blessed to realize if based on realistic positive images."

Imagine

This was the principle behind the Batangueño Fundraising Committee organized at the Cultural Center of the Philippines but has stuck.

At one of the sessions dubbed "Imagine Philippines," the participants were asked questions like: "What will the Philippines be like in the next five years?"

Pedro said one of the answers he remembered most was that which visualized the country "as the next Ireland" or design replica of Asia, with the abundance of local artistic talents finally making a bigger impact on the economy.

"We are importing many clothes, for example, when designs actually come from the Philippines. It's just that those countries 20 or 30 times we import have developed our names and "brands."

Pedro encouraged local government units to hold town or city versions of the "Imagine" sessions. Skeptics may dismiss it as just another gobbledygook or rhetorical exercise. But the "Pagsasama-sama" is a recognized concept in psychology and is actually being applied today to boost the performance of business organizations.

Creating worlds

"Words create worlds," said Reed Lopez, who coordinated the "Imagine Philippines" sessions at the CCP conference.

"We have seen how different nations around the world, [you will see that] they are of people who use things other people don't," Lopez said.

"So, it's likely being a victim mentality problems will really come your way," she said.

And she offered food for thought. "Identity is created nation...first in your head and then in your words."

'We are able to be the family we wanted to be'

By Nancy Carvajal

ALL HIS life, he had been a solid citizen and family man whose seemingly lucrative business would have him and his children.

Maybe before he died of cancer, as he lay in his hospital bed trying to lull asleep, former Senator Heherson Alvarez (Nationalist Citizens' Coalition) reached out and took the hand of his eldest son, Jaime.

It was the first time in his life he could remember that his father had deliberately held his hand, the son told the inquest proceedings.

"The will was broken down," said Carlos, the youngest son among five. "We were able to be the family that we all wanted to be, and they died together.

A son's love

Garchitorena's youngest described the former justice as very intellectual, a man who saw things in black and white—until his illness brought them all down together.

Carlos came home from the United States, where he had been studying, on learning that he, his first had been diagnosed with a brain tumor.

"I am glad that I have come home and been able to close my lovers-in-law father," he said.

Behind the cold exterior, Jaime said, was a man's man. The family shared in his father's last days.

Jaime, a former singer, is now general manager of an internet technology training center.

Joking about funeral

"It might be callous to say but the whole five weeks, [from the time] that my father discovered that he had terminal cancer, on the day he died, was filled with light moments," Jaime said.

"We talked about a lot of things, even joked about his funeral."

Jaime added: "My father lived. It let go of being a disciplinarian. Maybe he realized that we had grown up."

Closing the past

What the family felt during the last days was not the heaviness of someone dying because they had come to terms with each other and had found a closure to the different disagreements of the past, he said.

The disciplinary shadow of his father nobody he felt in his by words "was raised in five weeks," Jaime said.

The retired jurist had accepted that he was dying, according to his estranged wife, Micky Garchitorena.

Last words

"Without statistics before he died, his last words were, 'Inocencio hindi ako natatakot ng ipis.'" she told the inquest.

Vicky said he knew that his end was near.

He had two requests: To be buried beside his mother at the Loyola Memorial in Pantabangan and not to be cremated.

He also asked that his favorite prayer, Padre Pio's "Let my last breath be mixed of love," be read—it was read during the wake.

Three days before

Three days before Garchitorena died, former President Corazon Aquino visited him at the hospital and they prayed the rosary together.

Words for Cory

Garchitorena was among the most outspoken of professionals who joined protest rallies against Ferdinand Marcos after opposition leader Benigno Aquino was assassinated in 1983.

Mr Garchitorena said that when the former President dumbed her husband for all the support he had given her family, she heard him tell Aquino that he was ready to do it for her.

A resident Mass for the late jurist will be held at 7 p.m. at Immaculate de Jure Sacrosanto in Forbes Park, Makati, to be celebrated by three different priests before his interment on Tuesday.

Gutsy Garchi: Big loss Supreme Court never knew

Former page 1

called to give him personal greetings, especially last year.

Two other men Garchitorena called in same are him were Sandiganbayan sheriff Edgardo Erasmo and his deputy Manny Santos. The calls came earlier this month at 3 a.m. by the Makati Medical Center.

Protect the court

Erasmo remembers Garchitorena as the one who instilled discipline among members of the Sandiganbayan personnel and who was genuinely concerned about the safety of the anti-graft court's employees.

"He always tells me: 'Protect the building. Protect the people. Don't mistreat,'" he said.

When persons with harsh names at funeral wreath and Garchitorena suggested that security escorts be assigned to him, Santos turned him off.

"Ayaw ko ng anong palagay na ako ah, di lalabi if can handle myself. What do you think of me? I'm not a man?"

No to friends

Despite the threats, Garchitorena would insist on driving himself to and from work. He never had been assigned security, he said.

Erasmo also said Garchitorena was one justice who did not want people joining him out of court when he went home.

"Even if you are a close friend and you happen to mention to him about a case pending in his division, you cease to be his friend," he said.

One time, he said, a well-known lawyer who had earned Garchitorena's respect talked to the justice's wife, Vicky, about a case pending in the Sandiganbayan first division, which Garchitorena also chaired.

"When he heard this, he called the lawyer to come and said: 'Have time, anytime, to appear if you have a case here. Talk to us directly and bring your evidence,'" Untera quoted Garchitorena as telling the lawyer.

"In the last party, the court room was the place where cases should be discussed by prosecution and defense lawyers.

Unquestioned integrity

Members of the legal community, to yesterday mourned the passing of Garchitorena.

"Definitely he's a loss to the legal community. He was a highly respected jurist because for his integrity and learning," said former Solicitor Hilario, the Supreme Court spokesperson.

"The Supreme Court, I'm sure, is very saddened by his untimely demise," he added.

Justice Ileana Tinga said Garchitorena would have been a proud member of the high court.

"Definitely had it not been for some other circumstances, he should have gone up," Tinga said. "He was a man with a keen sense of justice."

Three times, the Judicial and Bar Council had nominated Garchitorena to the Supreme Court but he was not appointed, said the high court's Clerk of Court Lazaro-Javier.

Garchitorena headed the Sandiganbayan for 16 years until October 2002, when he opted for early retirement after contending that he could not meet the high court's deadline to dispose of the backlog of cases in his division.

The son of a Basque lawyer, There was no question about his integrity," said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez. With reports from Philip Tubeza

3 reunions give tribute, love ...

Former page 4 c

as he the 60th anniversary of the destruction of Temple Emil. This was the Jewish temple on Taft Avenue that was burned down by the Japanese, who vandalized and desecrated it before doing so. It was also the anniversary of the suicide/attack of the temple after it was rebuilt with the financial and moral support of Jewish Americans of other the war.

Startling

The ceremony began in a most startling manner for the Filipinos there: quietly but with big, floppy strides. Mostly white people would approach any Filipino they happened to see, and say "Shapanking pale pa!" Then over the bloodlines, very solemn, but young men upon a time, its time when they'd learned polite phrases in the local language.

It called to begin the service by a Jewish rabbi, as a young boy he had gone down to a river in their hometown with his grandfather, the day after the Nazis burned down the nation's capital of Manila. Tomb into the river. His grandfather—directing everyone to be both aware of the hideousness of racial and religious persecution, the need to remind future generations of the very recent past—prayed with every washing for the memories and affections of the departed—area one that touched those present deeply.

Near the end of the service, after the rabbi had read a letter describing the devotion of the Jewish people with God, I was asked to read a prayer over the challah, which as far as I understood it, was the ritual breaking of the bread.

Tapestry of time

The prayer was brief, but seemed to summarize everything the weekend was about. "As the fingers of the challah intertwine, so do we join hands in our quest for more humanity, that fog the fruits of our labors. We cherish that which has been created through human effort. For it is through the work of our hands, the strength of the human spirit, the voices of our minds, that our dreams are woven into the tapestry of time.

"We celebrate the accomplishments of yesterday and today, anticipating the possibilities of tomorrow. May the sharing of the challah among those present bonds with others who walk upon this earth."

From the religious rituals of the Jews, we moved on to a banquet thrown by the Filipino community of Cincinnati for the organizers and participants. Naturally, there was no pork, out of respect for the dietary restrictions of Jews, but no meat either, because it was Lent.

Evening of songs, dances

The highlight of the evening was, of course, singing and dancing. Most of the Americans present didn't know the meaning of the words of "Dance Ilka Bamboo," "Bahay Kubo," "Sa Ugoy ng Duyan," "Bahili sa Yo," and "Mis Ati Pilipino," but they all clapped enthusiastically and were lustily applauded at the demonstration of the "Tinikling."

As if the audience needed further evidence of the virtuous talents of the Filipinos, the chorale then performed "Have Magic" and "Heaven Guides Abraham," two Hebrew folk songs, which they sang with such gusto a clapping and singing along.

Feb. 10th was an intimate day beginning with a book signing by Frank Ephraim, whose dedication to saving about the life of his father and the Holocaust inspired the whole event.

'Musicians' memories

The evening was open at the home of Mark Rosmarin, one of the organizers, who is married to a Filipina, during which I had the chance to meet and talk to the Musicians who attended. Their memories and affection for a long-lost Philippines entranced me and intrigued me.

The weekend culminated with a ceremony at the Jewish Temple on Plum Street in Cincinnati, a massive and impressive structure. The program began with the lighting of the Shabbat candles, a beautiful, impressive ritual performed by a rabbi, and the chanting of verses by some of the refugees, and then messages from those who had helped them escape the Holocaust. There were messages as well from President Bush, the governor of Ohio, who happens to be a great grandson of William Howard Taft, the US governor-general in the Philippines from 1901 to 1904, and a granddaughter of President Carlos P. Garcia, Susan, who served as an assistant military adviser in Manila in the 1950s and was sympathetic to the Jews.

'Righteous person'

It was an extremely moving ceremony, not least because of the outpouring of prayers, admiration and affection for the Philippines and the Filipino people. On behalf of the Jewish refugees who found a home in the Philippines, the Center for Holocaust and Human, typewritten of President Quezon a "Righteous Person," the title given by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem to those who helped save Jews. There was, as a certificate naming that a tree in his memory had been planted in a forest in Jerusalem dedicated to the 1.2 million children killed during the Holocaust.

On behalf of my family I thanked them for the tribute and for their generosity. This is part of what I said in response:

Impulse of the heart

"We are gathered here to recognize the efforts that made it possible for refugees from the Holocaust to come to the Philippines so far. Mr. Ephraim's having received all of the fellow "Musicians" the refugees from Kristan that found refuge in Manila, traces the seen Woodrow Quezon tried to do all he could to help those escaping from terror and persecution. Quezon's own Filipino officials balked at granting access to public lands to the refugees, my grandfather gave the refugees access to his own private land, thereby bearing witness to one of his own maxims: Social justice, he said, is a matter of moral conduct applied as a matter of sentiment, and not of law. He means, and wanted to prove, that goodness and justice must come from an impulse of the heart, but must be implemented by honest men and the law.

While the audience very generously rose to its feet after I gave my remarks, I think—I know—they did so not for me, but for the Philippines.

[The author is a grandson of Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippine Commonwealth from 1935 to 1944.]

CLOSE-KNIT Three reunions at the Jewish temple on Plum Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. From left, Manuel L. Quezon III, Alice Weston, the oldest surviving member of the Frieder family, Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk and Aurora Q. Avancena.

Man searches for his 'Holocaust' ...

Former page 4 d

Filipino. Hence, we students of those years received a considerable dose of German-style disciplines at home, in church and in the study and practice of our Catholic faith.

Kindness, patience

Our 1500 school member superior, Bro. Werber Lucille Stogner, OSB and last assistant, Bro. Mario Alfonso Ortiz, OSB, took turns in admonishing or students in near the Belshazzar feasters with extra kindness and patience, since, they told us, they had undergone a lot of suffering and persecution when they were German nationals during their escape from Nazi Europe to the Philippines.

Our classmate Rachel Cecilia David, (she insisted that Philippine Congresswoman Prescilla Mamond L. Quezon) took great pity on the persecuted Jewish refugees that he opened the doors of the Philippines for them. They were welcome to settle here.

Quezon's offer

In fact, Mr. David added, President Quezon had offered the whole island of Pulilo off Tagbilaran (now Quezon province) as a home for about 10,000 Jews.

As the months passed, Mr. and Mrs. Feldenstein took turns in visiting and offered to inquire about the status of Gerhard and Manfred, commenting with the signs in transit. If I remember right, Mr. Dietrich managed to lease a large house in the railroad crossing at the south easternmy of the town and summoned it into a cultural lounge and restaurant, which was named the Dubai Bar from the tall and spreading dubai tree right in front of it. It became one of the favorite hangouts of American soldiers from Fort Stotsenburg (now Clark) every evening and on weekends.

On a fine occasions, or boys will be boys, Gerhard and Manfred felt prey to a few bullies who, probably out of curiosity, would enter the Holofernes bars to engage in some naughty games that inevitably resulted in kind fist fights—out of the gaze of the Germans.

Boys will be boys

These naughty Filipino boys simply seemed to find out how a "Nazi" boy would fight. Besides, they validated learning wildfish for meals or Gerhard's pale, chubby arms, legs and face. Poor Gerhard had no others weapons but to fight back in self defense. Besides, he was a big boy, and his fists most of the Filipino boys in age.

Manfred, as always, would start with a wide grin and run around playfully to the fragile who watched us. Whenever such challenges took place, I was the only other boy but the two Jewish boys who had no one on their side. Gerard myself be my inability to do something for them since I was too small and frail.

Too much

In one of these bullying incidents, I saw Manfred running around laughing trying his best to avoid body contact, but suddenly a fist hit his above midface assuming the shoulder of sporting his pulverized both hands clutching his chest. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. He was noticed who hit him. He was simply too much for me and in no anything so I rushed to his side and tried to help him somewhat him as a consolation. He managed a half-smile at me under the tears.

Broken breastbone

I tried to gently stroke his chest but he shouted a loud that I was perplexed her chest inside his half-opened shirt I saw a large and dark cellophane-covered patch that covered the whole of his chest. As this was Gerhard came and caretaker of his brother the best way he could. I asked him about the patch and he whispered that before their escape from Germany an SS officer hit Manfred with the butt of his rifle that broke his breastbone. It had not yet totally healed. A few of the bully boys were watching Manfred's ordeal in glee. They passed at me for being pro-Jew in countenance. I turned to them and sort of shouted in their direction the cause of Manfred's chest injury.

With remorse and his family stoked on their faces, one by one, they departed and left me with just the three of us huddled together. Manfred was still crying and I was Solitude he's kind-mannered brother.

Fortunately, Manfred's chest condition had not worsened.

Mongol pencil No. 1

A few days later I was overjoyed to receive a gift from the Belshazzarite—a precious and sought-after Mongol pencil No. 1—a dream pencil of every schoolboy as close close. There is very much in the US, a cost 15 centavos, an exorbitant price for a pencil for a poor schoolboy like me...since that amount would last me a week of recess allowance.

Enrile pushes amendments to power reform act

By Michael Lim Ubac

[illegible] Four years after passing the controversial Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), legislators now want the law amended to reduce the power of electricity.

Under Senate Bill No. 1939, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has proposed changes in the EPIRA law to prevent power generators and distributors from passing on their additional costs due to their own inefficiency, mistakes and questionable onerous contracts to the end users.

Enrile wants revisions that would "clarify vague and conflicting provisions and afford genuine protection to end-users of electricity in the hope of spurring genuine competition and market access to all industry participants."

He said electric consumers "rightfully deserve a solution that will cut the fat from our electricity bills."

The bill also sought to lower costs by providing "genuine competition and market access" to all industry participants. To protect electricity consumers, Enrile proposed:

- The National Power Corp. and distribution utilities shall be allowed to recoup their "stranded contract costs" with independent power producers (IPPs) through the universal charge after contingent review of these stranded costs.
- Bilateral contracts without open competitive bidding must be subjected to regulatory intervention to eliminate or minimize the passon costs to end users.
- Stranded contract costs will be collected from customers of the distribution utility converted to its own franchise territory.
- All rates that would be fixed and determined by the universal charge shall be approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) only after due notice to and public hearing participated in by all parties.

Dennis Roldan's pals may turn state witness

By Alexis Pupa

TWO cohorts of former Quezon City Rep. Dennis Roldan may turn state witnesses and testify against the ex-actor in the kidnapping of a 3-year-old boy.

Director Robert Delfin, head of police Intelligence and Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Paner), said the possibility of Roldan's accomplices turning state witness was the latest development in the case.

"But we are still studying it," Delfin said without elaborating.

Another officer involved in the investigation of the kidnapping earlier said the testimony of the two would bolster the case against Roldan and Janette Dee Wang, his former live-in partner.

The officer said the information provided by the two accomplices was being validated, and their qualifications as state witnesses evaluated.

To qualify, the two should be the least guilty of the crime, the officer said.

Wang, a close friend of the boy's mother, was said to have provided Roldan information on the child's movements.

In a recent TV interview, Wang denied involvement in the kidnapping but admitted to having a relationship with Roldan. [Michaël Tomdio is on call this]

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LEGAL ETHICS—Duty of notary public—Notaries public should be entitled to carrying out their functions. They must observe with the highest degree of care the basic requirements in the performance of their duties in order to preserve the confidence of the public in the integrity of the notarial system. Courts, lawyers and the public at large must be able to rely upon the acknowledgment executed by notaries public appended to instruments. Their functions should not be trivialized and they must discharge their powers and duties which are impressed with public interest, with accuracy and fidelity. With the resulting faith of the public in the integrity of public documents, this court will enforce all the more the notaries public to be more circumspect in the discharge of their duties. Indeed, faithful observance and utmost respect of the legal solemnity of the oath to an acknowledgment or jurat is mandated. The act of notarization is invested with substantive public interest such that only those who are qualified or authorized may perform the duties of notaries public. This responsibility is more pronounced when the notary public is a lawyer. A greater responsibility is placed upon him by reason of his solemn oath to obey the laws and to do no falsehood or consent to the doing of any. He is mandated to the utmost degree appertaining to his office, oath, duties, being dictated by public policy and impressed with public interest. Failing in his duties, he must bear the commensurate consequences. [Chitkara resolved.] [Resolution, Justice Angelina Montenegro, Reference re Mr. Atty. Adm. Case No. 4170, November 11, 2004] R-S. B. Vela

Gov't to review oil deregulation law

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Ringgit L. Ito

THE GOVERNMENT will review the nine-year-old law that deregulated the oil industry as prices of fuel products continued to rise.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye cited the position of outgoing Energy Secretary Vince Perez who said he was open to the possibility of reviewing the oil deregulation law following a series of oil price hikes.

"Secretary Perez recently mentioned that he is now open to the possibility of reviewing the oil deregulation law," Bunye said in a text message interview.

Yesterday at 12:01 a.m., the third largest oil firm Caltex Philippines Inc. jacked up the prices of its gasoline products by 60 centavos a liter, and raised the prices of diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter.

In its announcement issued late Friday evening, the company said the price adjustment was in response to competitive market forces as most local oil firms had announced price hikes earlier that day.

Apart from competition, however, Caltex said the surge in international and regional oil prices also prompted it to hike its prices.

Embedded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products, which Caltex, as a pure product importer, uses as basis in pricing its products, jumped to a 9-wk, 1 2/3 average of $52.47 a barrel from $47.58 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel also surged in a 10-week average of $53.61 a barrel, up by almost $3 a barrel from only $50.126 a barrel in January.

Oil firms Total (Philippines) Corp., Eastern Petroleum Corp., Seaoil Petroleum Corp. and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. also jacked up the prices of their gasoline and diesel by 60 centavos a liter and 50 centavos a liter, respectively.

But oil refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. had yet to adjust their prices despite the price hikes initiated by their competitors.

Independent players Flying V and PTT Philippines Corp. also said they would continue to monitor market conditions before making any price adjustments.

Gasoline prices rose for the first time this week after oil firms early last month reduced gasoline prices by P1 a liter.

Diesel prices, on the other hand, had gone up twice since the start of the year for a total of 90 centavos a liter.

Petez said consumers should just "exercise their power of choice in light of the recent adjustment in fuel prices (as) several oil firms have not raised prices."

Republic Act 8180, the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1996, was implemented to promote a more competitive market and prices by allowing the entry of "small" oil players in the market monopolized by the so-called Big Three, namely, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum, Caltex Philippines Inc. and Petron Inc.

This paved the way for the removal of the government subsidy in oil prices, called the Oil Price Stabilization Fund, which provided cushion to oil price increases.

In 1998, a new oil deregulation law (RA 8479) was enacted to pave the way for the full deregulation of the oil industry.

Airlines say they can't meet Naia 3 deadline

By Nikko Dizon

AIRLINE companies will not be able to meet the June 23 scheduled opening of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's National 3 because of time constraints, according to Leonido Nakpil, chair of the Airline Operators' Council (AOC).

Nakpil said the airlines would need six months to make the transfer from the old Terminal 1, or they would need this much time to relocate their offices and their passenger lounges, and to set up their computer systems, among others.

He said the AOC and the Board of Airline Representatives (BAR) have informed Mitsuo Cano, the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) general manager, by letter that the airlines would not make the deadline.

The AOC represents officials from 29 airline companies and seven ground handlers, while the BAR is made up of airline country managers.

Nakpil said the construction of an airline office is a lot more complicated than that of an ordinary office space, mainly because of the network of computer systems that have to be installed to ensure the airline's smooth operations.

"We are still supporting the Miaa on the opening of the new terminal. The Miaa is bent on opening Naia 3 in June. But it's like opening a door of a house without the door. How can you open an airport without the airlines?" he said.

Nakpil said the six-month lead time that the airlines need would begin upon the signing of the final concessionaire's lease contract with the Miaa.

But he said the airline companies have yet to receive a copy of the draft contract despite the announcement that Public Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza made on Feb. 18 that the contracts would be made available that week.

Mendoza earlier said that the Office of the Solicitor General had given the go-signal for the Miaa to issue the airline companies their lease contracts.

The government announced that the commercial airport terminal would open for operations on June 23 after it repurposed the facility from builder Philippine Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) last December.

Legal issues over Naia 3 are pending before the Supreme Court and two international arbitration courts.

The AOC earlier said it would take from three weeks to a month to have a final contract approved.

Nakpil said the draft contract has to go to the airline company's headquarters abroad for review and concurrence before it can finally come back to the Philippines. Then the Miaa has to approve it (because of the final revised copy, before the company and the Miaa sign the contract.

AOC members waited last Wednesday for the Miaa to release the draft contract but were informed by Judith Tudor of the Miaa public affairs office that the draft had been sent to the OSG for review and revision.

NAIA 3: When will it finally open?

In late January the AOC expressed apprehension over the rush in the opening of the Naia 3, saying that the tight deadline being given the airline companies could compromise security, safety and the smoothness of service.

The AOC said the rushed deadline could even expose the airline companies to lawsuits from passengers.

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SuperFerry victims' families remember

By Lala B. Salaverria

THE FIRST anniversary today of the SuperFerry 14 bombing will be marked with prayers and flowers as the families of the victims of the tragedy continue to cope with the painful memory and try to gain strength from each other.

Some 115 families are expected to go today to Gateway Bay in Mariveles, Bataan, where the wreckage of the 10,000-ton ship was towed after it caught fire after an explosion off Corregidor Island.

The ship had since been brought to a Batangas port.

At Emirates Bay, a Mass will be held aboard the vessel that Coast Guard commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Rentoyan will preside to ferry the families to the area.

Bouquets and pictures of the victims will be thrown into the sea, while white balloons will be launched into the air, said Edward Leyco, who lost his 68-year-old mother Leonor to the fire.

"We want the affair to be symbolic," Leyco said.

But the event will be more painful for some than for others, as several families have yet to recover the remains of their loved ones.

Leyco said the relatives of those whose remains could not be found or identified would ask the government to build a shrine so the families would have someplace to go to to remember them.

"It's going to be difficult for the families of the missing to cope with their loss when they do not even have a grave to visit. Last All Soul's Day was very hard on them," he said.

Leyco said it would be fine with the families if the shrine were built in Metro Manila.

Leyco, who hails from Iligan City, was able to recover his mother's remains, but he stayed in touch with the families of the other victims who were mostly from Surallah and Cagayan de Oro cities and other parts of Mindanao.

According to him, some 50 families had yet to find the remains of their relatives who were passengers of SuperFerry 14.

Leyco said the losses of the unidentified were still being held in a Manila funeral parlor. The families of the missing passengers would also ask authorities to ensure that those remains would not be burned.

"Basic reluctance cited in a fire. It would be doubly painful if their remains would be burned again," he said.

But the last reported count from the National Bureau of Investigation, 61 fatalities were identified in the incidents.

The NBI earlier said a total of 116 passengers were reported missing right after the incident, but SuperFerry 14's management said only 111 people had relatives looking for them.

SuperFerry 14 had just left Manila and was on its way to Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro when it was rocked by an explosion that set it ablaze shortly past midnight last year. At the time, it was carrying over 800 passengers and crew.

The Abu Sayyaf immediately claimed responsibility for the fire, saying it had dispatched a member to plant a bomb on board. It was only recently learn that the government acknowledged the Abu Sayyaf's responsibility in the bombing.

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Malverse raps vs mayor upheld

THE SUPREME Court has upheld the filing of malversation charges against a Misamis Occidental mayor for the alleged illegal disbursement of a total of P720,000 from the pork barrel of Rainier Tiqui Rillon in Ramon in 1999.

In a 27-page ruling on Feb. 16, the high court's second division upheld the finding of the Sandiganbayan that there was probable cause to charge Mayor Felix Sangcopan Jr. of Tudela, Misamis Occidental, with malversation of public funds. It also upheld the charges of falsification of public documents against Tudela municipal accountant Sheilla Gallego and Emma Dependolon.

Sangcopan, Gallego and Dependolon signed the pork barrel funds to the town's 33 barangay captains who thought the money was "gratuitous" or a cash gift from Sangcopan. Each official received P20,000 each from his own pocket as a "personal gift."

Since the barangay captains were not aware that the funds had come from Ramon's Country-wide Development Fund (CDF), none of them thought that it was up to them how to spend it.

Later, when Sangcopan liquidated the cash disbursements, he claimed that they were expenses for "peace and security" made in the barangays.

Philip C. Tubeza

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3rd Place - Kristine L. Lucero
4th Place - Nathan A. Lagonoy
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MEDICINE - FEBRUARY 2005
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2nd Place - Lynn Angelique Lucero
3rd Place - Ariel Lacambra

DENTISTRY - 2003
1st Place - Sharon T. Salita

DENTISTRY - 2004
4th Place - Jennifer G. Tolosa

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY - 2003
4th Place - Maryjoe D. Rojo

PHYSICAL THERAPY - 2003
1st Place - Glenda R. Mendiola, III
2nd Place - Rosalie Ann T. Ilumba
3rd Place - Angelo T. Ilumba

MEDICAL THERAPY - 2004
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2nd Place - Michelle Anne T. Ilumba
3rd Place - Gregorio T. Ilumba

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Improve students' communication skills, schools urged

By Jocelyn Arong

LABOR Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has called on universities and other education-al institutions to equip their students with the proper communication skills to facili-tate their employment.

Speaking before students, graduates and members of the academe at the 74th anniver-sary of the University of the Philippines Ma-nila Extension Society at UP Los Baños on Feb. 25, Sto. Tomas said poor communication skills was among the five reasons many grad-uates failed to get the jobs they desired.

Although many graduates passed written exams with flying colors, she noted that most ended up not getting jobs after failing in the personal interviews or oral tests because of poor communication skills.

Sto. Tomas said students must not only be trained in skills needed in their chosen fields but also on the basic requirements for "em-ployability."

She cited a current analysis on job vacan-cies posted in the classified ads sections of two major newspapers conducted by the la-bor department over a one-month period.

The analysis showed that the bulk of po-sitional requirements were mostly in account-tancy and medical-related fields, engineering, and for graduates of vocational, automotive and information technology-related courses.

Sto. Tomas said despite the numerous graduates of each course, the vacancies were not easily filled due to the applicants' lack of basic requirements for employability.

A survey of 50 employers who used the government's online employment website PhilJobNet for their hiring requirements showed that despite the preliminary match-es between a jobseeker and a potential job, most applicants failed to get the job due to few reasons.

First was failure in the exam or interview, followed by poor communication skills and lack of executive work experience; fourth was the applicant's resistance for from the job site, and, fifth, inconsistency of docu-ments and the responses of the applicants during the interviews.

Sto. Tomas said the students should have gained those basic requirements such as com-munication skills while in school.

Absence of such skills, then, points to the fact that the current education and training system does not adequately prepare students to get a job or at least to success-fully pass job-screening proce-dures, she said.

She stressed that there was a need to reassess the country's ed-ucation and training sector so that priority could be given to en-hancing the students' readiness to maintain into the job market.

Sto. Tomas said schools should al-so link up with the business sector in determining the skills that stu-dents must learn in order to meet emerging industry requirements.

Tourism industry may hire displaced Pinoy entertainers

THE PHILIPPINE tourism industry is willing to absorb some of the overseas performing artists (OPAs) who would be displaced by Japan's implementation of new entertainer visa requirements next month.

Philippine Tourism Authority general manag-er Robert Unat (before) said OPAs may be em-ployed as tour guides and interpreters for Japanese tourists coming to the country.

Some could also find jobs as cultural per-formers and entertainers in domestic getaway, resort-type tourism facilities. Others could be trained to be front desk managers, food and beverage personnel and hostesses/guests of ho-tels, resorts and other facilities operated by the PTA, Barbers said.

"Tourism alone cannot accommodate all of the jobless entertainers. But we're willing to at-tend some of them so that their skills in tourism could be wanted and they would at least have some income to earn a living," he said.

Japan's new immi-gration rule requires OPAs to have at least two years' training or experience in their fields. The OPA sector in the country fears the entertainment ban could affect the Philippines' average annual deploy-ment of 80,000 OPAs.

The PTA, as its lead agency of the Department of Tourism, implements policies and manages the government's tourist. Administra-tion. Barbers recently began developing plans of PTA's functions to local governments and privatizing some of the agency's assets and their operations.

Barbers said he would be soon holding talks with the DFA re-garding how the latter is to discuss how the displaced performers could be employed in factories and industry-related private firms.

—Carmela Arong

La Union tutor, 84

AGUINIA Aquino Villanueva of San Fer-nando City, La Union, succumbed to pneu-monia on Feb. 23 at the age of 84.

She was a public school teacher in the San Fernando Elementary School for nearly 40 years. She graduat-ed from the Philippine Normal School in 1936 at the age of 19 and was one of the first natives of San Fernan-do to earn an Elementary School Teacher's Certificate. Her first teaching assignment was in the town of Sargan La Union.

She was married to Cirilo Villanueva, former mayor of San Fernando and later re-gional judge in Cotabato, Nueva Ecija. They had six children, Jacqueline, Nina, Ba-sen, Cirilo, Gaudencio Jr. and Ruby.

On her retirement, she devoted her time to volunteer work and was active in the ecu-menical church move-ment in San Fernando.

She will be buried at the San Fernando City cemetery on Feb. 28.

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The WORLD

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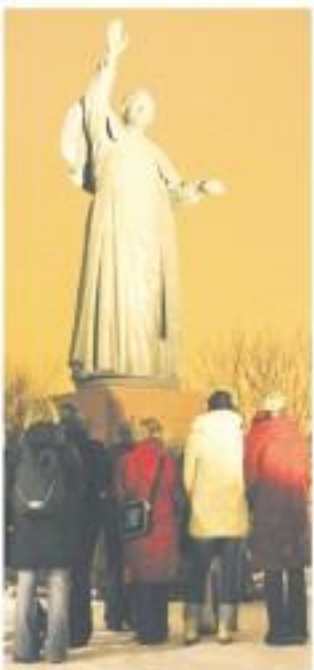

PEOPLE pray under the Pope John Paul II monument at the Jasna Gora monastery in Czestochowa, Poland, Feb. 25. —

Pope's suffering viewed as key message for world

By Victor L. Simpson

VATICAN CITY—Young and experienced, those who answered the papacy, Pope John Paul II has been a picture of pain and suffering in recent years, a bent figure with trembling hands and quavering voice.

Yet the 84-year-old Pontiff appears intent on playing out his agony for all the world to see—sending a message of dignity, courage and acceptance of the trials of life.

As the Pope was rushed to the hospital Thursday for the second time in three weeks with breathing problems, the Vatican newspaper suggested he was sharing in Christ's suffering and said "the bed of pain" has become "the cathedral of life."

Even Cardinal Renato Martino called it "a real example of how to accept human suffering."

It is a message that top aides have been reading as a pope once called "God's athlete" has steadily deteriorated physically over the past decade, burdened by Parkinson's disease and crippling knee and hip ailments.

Some question, however, how long a pope who once skied and hiked can guide the 1 billion Catholic faithful when his voice is slurred and he can barely walk.

The Pope's frailties have been watched by the world and several times caused fear.

During a pilgrimage to the Slovak shrine at Lourdes in August he stumbled and asked an aide to help him, calling out in his native Polish. Already during a 1999 trip to the former Soviet republic of Georgia, media formed a buffet to shield the shaking pontiff from the wind.

"It is a representative image, neither futuristic, of what is without duality in the Church," Vatican thinker said at that time.

The power of suffering may be alien to many but the younger was the core of Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ," a box office success around the world. The film was endorsed by several top Vatican cardinals and was viewed by John Paul, although the Vatican denied he had expressed his approval.

The Pope's views on illness and suffering have another side to them, as he pointed out in his recent message written for Lent that included a forceful condemnation of euthanasia.

"What would happen if the people of God yielded to a certain current mentality that considers these people, our brothers and sisters, as almost useless ones who are reduced in their capacities due to the difficulties of age or sickness," the pope said.

The commandment "Thou shalt not kill," he said, "applies even to the presence of illness and when physical weakness reduces the person's ability to be self-reliant."

As papal biographer George Weigel, the Pope's suffering is a reminder that "especially in the West, we live in a world in which we think the old and the suffering are dispensable."

"The Pope is saying there are no dispensable people. That is a very important message for the whole world, not just for Christians," he said.

Inevitably, the Pope's physical decline raises questions about how long he can steer the church, particularly as his speech deteriorates.

The much-traveled John Paul has already been cutting back on his foreign trips, with only an August pilgrimage to a Catholic youth festival in Germany on the schedule this year. While keeping up with his audiences, even during his recent convalescence, he has been leaving more and more of the actual business to aides.

When John Paul labored at Lourdes, Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels found it an "extremely moving" moment but also said he found the pope "seriously weakened."

But Cardinal Javier Lozano Jose Barragan, a Mexican based at the Vatican, said it was enough for the Pope to express himself in writing if he can't talk.

For important decisions regarding serious problems and issues of the Church, values have to be taken daily, it is important for him to express himself and even if he cannot speak he can write, "he said. AP

4 Israelis killed in suicide bombing at Tel Aviv disco

TULKARM, West Bank—Hours after a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, Israeli troops on Saturday launched their biggest and toughest military operation in the Palestinian territories since agreeing a ceasefire with the Palestinians this month and arrested four brothers.

Villagers in their al-Ghoson said soldiers told them the men were brothers of the suspected bomber who killed four Israelis outside a Tel Aviv night club on Friday and were also thought to have been involved.

The Army confirmed the raid but gave no further details.

The bombing shattered a de facto truce by militants that has stymied several weeks of calm and reinforced hopes for peacemaking after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed a ceasefire on Feb.8.

The Palestinian Authority vowed to crack down those behind the bombing. Israel said Abbas had to crack down on militants instead of just talking as the factions in a tryst over three weeks before the ceasefire.

Responsibility for the bombing outside a popular karaoke night spot on Friday remained unclear.

A cell of the militant Islamic Jihad group in the West Bank claimed the attack, but the Israel's leadership in the Gaza Strip denied any knowledge and said it would continue its moderate rules.

Villagers said at least 21 Israeli Army military vehicles raided Beit al-Ghoson, north of Tulkarm, and imposed a curfew before dawn.

A military source said: "The action is now over and the curfew has been lifted."

The bombing was the first since Nov. 1 and brought scenes of wailing ambulances and upturned blood that many hearts had begun to believe that they had put behind them.

Sharon was to meet senior security officials on Saturday to discuss the response.

Israeli officials made clear that the Jewish state would "defend itself against terror," but said whatever action was taken would be in line with the ceasefire understanding.

They put the main onus to act on Abbas, who had until now been credited with delivering on his promises of calm.

"The Palestinians have taken some important steps, but they have to complete the job. They cannot rely on agreements with terrorist organizations," said Ranaan Gissin, Sharon's spokesperson.

Abbas' government said: "The Palestinian Authority will not be silent about this subterfuge and it will pursue whoever stands behind this act and will inflict the required punishment."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice demanded that Palestinian leaders find those responsible and "send a clear message that terror will not be tolerated."

Washington has stepped up efforts to revive the peace process after Abbas was elected to succeed late President Yasser Arafat with a pledge of non-violence.

Abbas has hoped to win the militants to his ceasefire over rather than use force to win them in.

"For more than two months there was calm and quiet and the Palestinians enjoyed this as well," said rapid driver Uli Schechter amid the debris in Tel Aviv. "Now we are back in deadlock and a process of bloodletting." Reuters

AN ISRAELI woman in shock is helped at the site of a Palestinian suicide attack in the Israel city of Tel Aviv Feb. 25. —

N. Korea ready to return to nuke talks, says China

ASIANA—North Korea is committed to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and is prepared to resume six-party talks, China's foreign minister said Friday as South Korea's president called for multilateral two-day bilateral talks.

"I believe the conditions are there for resuming the negotiations," Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said following talks in the capital of Kazakhstan with his counterparts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The agreement was the cooperation Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Chinese President Hu Jintao had recently transmitted a message to the North Korean leadership stressing the need for nuclear-free status, security and peace on the Korean peninsula and calling on Pyongyang to return to the six-party talks as soon as possible, Li said.

"In its response," North Korea "said it fully accepts that the Korean peninsula must be free of nuclear weapons and is ready to take part in the six-party talks," he added.

North Korea participated in three inconclusive rounds of nuclear crisis talks already with South Korea, Russia, the United States, China and Japan, but boycotted a fourth round in September, citing US "hostilities."

Pyongyang announced earlier this month that it possessed nuclear weapons and was withdrawing from the negotiations indefinitely, a move many experts played down as a routine negotiating tactic. Prospects for a fourth round brightened after South Korean leader Kim Jong-il indicated on Tuesday this week that he could return to talks if the conditions were right.

Kim's statement followed a four-day visit by senior Chinese Communist Party official Wang Jiarui to Pyongyang which concluded Tuesday, with Beijing also announcing afterwards that North Korea would in fact ready to talk.

The United States, however, voiced skepticism, with a state department spokesperson saying that "all of these statements" about North Korea's willingness to return to the negotiating table "don't amount to them showing up."

In his first public response to the North Korean announcement, it was positive out of the talks, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun called Friday for calm.

He admitted that he was facing an "unprecedented situation" but said South Korea would stick to its principle of resolving the 29-month-old standoff over North Korea's nuclear program peacefully through dialogue. AFP

French finance minister quits over flat scandal

PARIS—French Finance Minister Herve Gaymard resigned on Friday over a scandal about his state-paid luxury apartment that rocked the conservative government as it forces unpopular cost-cutting measures on a restive nation.

French President Jacques Chirac named Premier Minister Dominique de Villepin as his replacement, handing a question mark over who would take over the leadership of the telecoms company.

"I have decided to bend to the prime minister my resignation as minister of economy, finance and industry," Gaymard said in a statement.

"I am aware of having made blunders and a serious error of judgment concerning the conditions of my official accommodation."

The move came less than five hours before Gaymard was to go on national television to explain why he, his wife and eight children enjoyed a 600-square-meter (6,500-square-foot) a month apartment paid for by the cash-strapped state.

French ministers are entitled to official accommodation but the price of his apartment, even for central Paris, was deemed unacceptably extravagant by many critics, even in times of luxury.

The monthly rent on Gaymard's flat is roughly equivalent to the annual minimum wage for a worker in France.

Gaymard, 45, had denied any wrongdoing for just the 600 sq. m. split-level home in a elite Paris district as the center of the scandal that also involved his wife.

The rental costs of renovating the flat to his family's needs dismayed public and politicians alike. His pledge to reimburse the rent failed to abate the sense of shock.

Gaymard's donation was appointed by his successor to the post of budget portfolio and personal finance minister Jean-Francois Copse in give him until the end of the week to end a controversy that was burning an already unpopular government.

His late apparent to have been eroded by a report that he insured his homes, including another large flat in central Paris, coming at the same time as a gloomy society magazine quoted him as saying "I'm not broke" and that the rent would not have required if he had had the money to buy his own apartment. Reuters

MERCEDES STOPPER
A 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Gullwing Coupe is displayed at the exhibit, "Speed, Style and Beauty: Cars from the Ralph Lauren Collection" at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, Feb. 22. —

UN fears its peacekeepers commit sex abuse worldwide

WASHINGTON—UN officials fear the sex abuse scandal among peacekeepers in Africa is far more widespread and appears to be a problem in each of the global body's 16 missions around the world.

As the world body seeks to crack down on the abuse, it could face resistance from participating countries if they fail to prosecute offenders, even though the UN is largely pressed to find sentencing systems, the officials said on Friday.

Backed by widespread abuse of women and girls, including gang rape, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations also has found sexual exploitation cases in at least four other missions—in Burundi, Liberia, Ivory Coast ...as well as more recently in Haiti, they added.

"We think this will look worse before it begins to look better," Jane Holl Lute, assistant secretary general for peacekeeping operations, told reporters. "We expect that more information will come from every mission as it

...

legations. We are prepared for that."

The undersecretary general for peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guehenno, said that up to now the UN had assisted identifying countries that were slow to court-martial their troops but that he had demanded action within six weeks in some cases.

"There are aspects of a very direct abuse which is that if they don't get their act together, we are going to tell them to get out of their mission," Guehenno said, referring to call of the peacekeeping ministers and not just the Congo.

There are nearly 11,000 military personnel in the Congo to help keep the peace after a civil war. The force is the largest among the more than 60,000 soldiers in UN peacekeeping operations around the world.

The United States, whose support is essential for peacekeeping missions, said it shared the UN's fears and wanted the world body to make preventing further abuses a priority. Reuters

4 US soldiers, 13 Iraqis killed; British soldiers jailed for abuse

BAGHDAD—Four US soldiers and 13 Iraqis were killed in central Iraq, as while three British soldiers were jailed in Germany for abusing Iraqi civilians.

Meanwhile, a US general ruled out a timeline for a full transfer of security to Iraqi security, while Iraq's leading Shiite political coalition announced it had established a committee to start talks on forming the next government.

As Iraq's political leaders maneuvered for power, the insurgency that has plagued Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 raged on.

In the Sunni Arab rebel province of Al Anbar, 10 US Marine were killed Friday the military announced Saturday, without giving details.

The death raised to 1,440 the number of US servicemen killed in attacks or accidents in Iraq since the start of the invasion in March 2003, according to Pentagon figures.

It came as US forces moved into a sixth day of what they said Operation Steel Rain aimed at increasing security throughout western Al Anbar province.

The military said it had arrested 21 people Friday and 155 since the operation kicked off.

Three other US soldiers were killed and nine wounded Friday when a roadside bomb—which—on patrol near Ramadi, the military said.

But in a possible security breakthrough, Iraq's government said a senior aide to al-Qaida frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had been arrested, along with seven who had served as his drivers.

"Security forces in Iraq conducted a raid in Anah (in western Iraq) on Feb. 23 resulting in the capture of 'Hilli WAHB Azzaz Mahmut al-Dulaimi, aka Abu Qaaydah, a trusted lieutenant of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," it said.

He arranged safe houses and transportation for the Zarqawi network as well as passing packages and funds to Zarqawi himself, a statement said.

In addition to the attacks on US forces, two members of the Iraqi security forces, seven civilians and four insurgents had been killed since Thursday security sources said.

Meanwhile, insurgents also continued their assaults on Iraq's strategic infrastructure. A pipeline in the oil-rich northern region of Kirkuk was blown up Friday night, said Ali Abdullah, an oil official from the Northern Oil Co.

In Germany, three British soldiers were jailed for abusing Iraqi civilians and were dishonorably discharged from the Army in a rare clear-cut case of prisoners at the Iskandaria Abu Ghraib prison.

Cpl. Daniel Nelson, 33, was jailed for 18 months after being found guilty of three charges.

Lance Cpl. Mark Cooley, 25, was jailed for two years for disgraceful and cruel conduct for driving a forklift truck with a bound Iraqi suspended from the prongs. AFP

THAI DEVOTEE
A Thai traditional dancer performs at the Erawan Shrine Feb. 26, in Bangkok, Thailand. The star, which is dedicated to the Hindu god of creation, is popular with tourists. Worshipers in the thousands come daily to the shrine to offer prayers. »

North American Anglicans defend gay policies

OTTAWA—The North American branches of the Anglican Church dissented from unanimous signs on Friday of submitting to an attempt by the worldwide communion to crack down on ordaining gay bishops and blessing same-sex unions.

Anglican church leaders meeting in Northern Ireland decided late on Thursday to ask the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada to voluntarily withdraw from its decision-making Anglican Consultative Council and for a moratorium on same-sex blessings and gay bishop ordination.

The two churches said they would examine the request to withdraw but refused to commit to it right away. And they defended their policies that had triggered the controversies.

"The Episcopal Church has sought to act with integrity," Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold said in a statement from the meeting. His denomination had touched off a firestorm in 2003 when it confirmed Gene Robinson as bishop, and his statements gave no suggestion of a halt on future ordinations.

At least two dioceses said they would continue to authorize the blessings of same-sex unions for now, despite the request for a moratorium.

The diocese of North Carolina—one of seven U.S. dioceses with unions policies on same-sex blessings—said it would maintain its practice for now.

"The current policy will continue until this issue makes its way through the discussion process now under way," spokesperson Kaye Lozier Culp said.

The British Columbian diocese of New Westminster, which started same-sex blessings in 2002, also said it would not stop at least until a vote is coming on the in April or May.

"The blessings continue at least till the synod," diocesan spokesperson Nicole Arlette said.

The primate of the Canadian church, Archbishop Andrew Hutchison said he would maintain his own recommendation of a moratorium but said he personally favored such blessings. He said New Westminster had been acting within its rights and done it to advance justice.

"Doing so in print of justice is not a price they have been prepared to pay," he said.

A conservative wing of the Episcopal Church, however, resisted in the moves from the Northern Ireland meeting, the result of months flexing by traditional churches like in Africa and Latin America.

"The clarity with which the primates have spoken is breath-taking," said Pittsburgh Bishop Robert Duncan of the Anglican Communion Network. "The authority of Scripture is upheld."

There is now a question over whether the world-wide Anglican Church will stay as one, though three years appear as time have bought until the once-a-decade Lambeth Conference in Brazil in 2008.

"What this has done is brought us back from the brink," Canadian Archbishop Hutchison said by telephone. Reuters

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OPINION

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Amazing

AT A TIME when so many doctors are taking up nursing so they can find employment overseas, Christopher and Maria Victoria Bernales would probably strike a lot of people as an odd couple. After going to the United States to earn their doctorate in physics, they came home. And they came back not to the University of the Philippines where they used to teach, but to their native Ilagan in Bohol where Chris' grandfather had founded a small high school.

EDITORIAL

Even more amazing is what the Bernales have done to their school and to their students in the relatively short time since they took over the school less than a decade ago. It's not so much that their neck of the woods has seen international conferences at which Nobel laureates in physics delivered lectures, although that is a rarity even in Metropolitan Manila. It is our own that they are helping institutions in the south improve their science teaching and research capabilities by conducting training sessions and seminars. The most wonderful thing they have done is make their students really learn and appreciate Math and Science.

One good measure of how far they have come is that four of their graduates qualified for admission to the University of the Philippines in the 2002 exams and five in 2003, while no one had passed in previous decades. Moreover, visiting educators have marveled at the quality of the work the students produce as shown in the fallout of activity sheets they put together, including examination papers, exercise sheets and laboratory reports.

How the students get to imbibe so much of their lessons is the product of a method unique in the Philippine setting. The emphasis is on "learning by doing" instead of the traditional "learning by listening," as Raul Fabella, Cristina Fabella and Virgie Marie Fabella observed in their contribution to "Talk of the Town" in last Sunday's Inquirer. Thus, lectures on a certain subject are limited to 20 minutes, while the rest of the period is given to the discussion of concepts among the students themselves, solving problems and doing exercises, and conferring with the teacher when the going gets tough. "The basic behavioral premise is that if you create an environment that rewards inquiry and reflection, students will hollow the core," the Fabellas noted.

Studying at the Central Visayas Institute Foundation is less of a burden in its students than in many other private schools. For one thing, the seasonal matriculation fee, which covers everything, is only P1,700. And since the system requires "student work" be done in school, students have more time, if called for, to help their parents, mostly farmers, with the real work of earning a living.

The next amazing thing about the Bernales' grand experiment is that they have accomplished so much with so little. Their school squats on property it doesn't own. With the school fees kept low, sometimes the school has difficulty meeting the payroll. Whether it is for economic or other reasons, lectures are conducted "seminar style" with all the students taking a particular subject in attendance.

What the Bernales have going in their school perhaps offers what could be the best hope of reversing the downward spiral in the quality of Philippine education. They have shown that being among the bottom-dwellers in international proficiency tests in Science and Math, the two areas in which our Asian neighbors excel, need not be a permanent condition. They have shown that lack of resources, be it classrooms, teachers or physical facilities, doesn't condemn anyone to the lowest rung in terms of academic performance. But more than anything else, they have taught us, especially our education policymakers and officials, that the only limits to learning and imparting learning are those set by our imaginations or the lack of it.

Greatest threat

WHAT is the greatest threat in the world? Terror networks or climate change and poverty?

Worldwatch Institute thinks the answer is clear. Climate change threatens not the Earth, or at least results in major changes in population patterns and economies. Poverty and disease undermine society and development. It is now hard to argue with this analysis.

And the same, the Institute observes, is true of conflict, including an artificial division between fighting terrorism and fighting climate change and poverty.

FOREIGN COMMENT

The al-Qaeda network did not emerge because of poverty, even though lack of employment and other opportunities provides fertile ground for fanaticism and resentment. Good governance based on democratic values is a precondition for solving these big problems. It is also a precondition for reducing the terror threat.

Aftenposten (Oslo, Norway)

The plodding administration of justice

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THERE is another disturbing report, again from Justice Reynato S. Puno, chief of the Supreme Court, this time about delay in the administration of justice in this country. He says that there are some 800,000 cases now pending in the lower courts, for which he gives a number of reasons, some of them excuses, but adds that the problem applies as well to the high tribunal, which is itself no paragon of speedy justice. (The condensation are mine.)

The Commission of 1987 prescribes obligatory periods for decision of cases by the various levels of our judiciary, 24 months for the Supreme Court, and various reduced by 6, 12 months for all lower courts like the regional trial courts and the city and municipal courts (plus the Sandiganbayan).

The Constitution of 1973 also laid down non-extendible periods for the decision of cases by the different courts then, like the Supreme Court practically reduced them because by holding that they were merely directory, being subject to its control. This ruling has been nullified by the present charter, which describes such new periods as "mandatory."

Additionally, Sec. 16 of the Bill of Rights provides that "all persons shall have the right to a speedy disposition of their cases before judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative bodies." And Sec. 14 guarantees to all persons facing criminal prosecution the right to a speedy trial, which is defined as "one free from vexatious, capricious and oppressive delays."

Pangalinan says that one-third of the total courts are vacant, owing mostly to the lack of incumbent to promoting lawyers to join the judiciary. The most offensive deterrent is the small pay of our judges of the many courts compared to the average earnings of most practicing lawyers. Few compromise to that some of those low-paid judges increase their income through corruption. Another is disinterestedness or, as they say in basketball, those who commit play given the bench.

It is unnecessary, though, that there still is a considerable number of applicants before the judicial and Bar Council but for the charm in the law peaceful areas, to some places, particularly in Mindanao, people prefer to settle their disputes by themselves, rather than in the trial courts, which remain idly or vacant, appointment to these courts is considered humiliations and even life demeaning.

In the Supreme Court itself, according to Pangalinan, there are no less than 6,000 pending cases to be resolved by only 15 members. Eventually may be thirteen. There are many ways of delaying a case, as kings lawyers are demonstrating and Lotte Tan can. The cases against the financiers are still clean, having conveniently disappeared despite public appearances to awaken them.

Only recently I received a plaintive appeal for my help from the International School Alliance of Educators which was instituted by the Supreme Court in its petition for unjust pay for teachers in our foreign-law hiring. That landmark decision was rendered on June 1, 2000, and became final and executory on Dec. 12, 2000. To date, it has yet to be implemented because of various efforts of the respondents International School Manila to invalidate it.

[illegible] Chief Justice Davide Trinidad Corp. counsel, the arguments in that case of those two-point

Who will be the next PNP chief?

RIVELLE

Rommel J. Banlaoi

Orbit to the Philippine Supermarine to commemorate the national centennial celebration. Since that during the battle for the liberation of Manila in February 1945, one of our readers, James Lizon, argues that the years of Intramuros in Pampanga has a historic reminiscence of a Japanese battalion who resisted among the main highway of the town.

Lizon, a prominent lawyer, has our historical writing on the Japanese that their economy enjoyed some sort of spiritual protection, particularly from foreign invaders.

During the last stages of the Pacific conflict in World War II, Japanese pilots (kamikazes) flew their planes straight into US warships in a futile, but heroic, attempt to defend their motherland.

Japanese mentality. Perhaps, the same efficient of Intramuros could cheer with in some interesting explanation for bolstering the battalion pilot. I am not aware of any other country in the region which has a secret device to kamikaze pilots the same honor.

* * *

Last Thursday, in ceremonies in Malacañang Palace, Gen. Efren Abu, AFP chief of staff finally got his fourth star while his classmate, Lt. Gen. Constancio Bringas, fellow classmate, got his third. Both belong to PMA Class of 1972, the class which graduated just a few months before the declaration of martial law. The President took the occasion to announce that she will no longer observe the "revolving door" policy which she practiced in the past. Instead, in the appointment of several AFP chiefs serving short terms of only three months. This "revolving door" policy only benefited individuals while the organization suffered from instability and a lack of direction and continuity.

Efren's last announcements that she was not considering the appointments of PMA chief Director General Edgar Aglipay and that she was dispensing with any three short term calculations on the eve of retirements (that, just to tell the truth, was all the PMA Class of 1972's members for the PNP chief. This list includes Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, Nine the Dr. Leon, Police III and Director Rolando Garcia.

Next in line is Director Jovito Palparan, PMA Class of 1972, but his more than a year to get to his term extension in July 2006 and has the backing of well-known administration officials. I believe the President has set her mind on him. Note that the MP chief, the Army and Navy commanders will belong to PMA Class of 1972.

Some people have suggested the idea of deep selection going for someone like Director Jovito "Benny" Rasul, PMA Class of 1974. In a way, he can represent the wave of the future.

During the interview, the term "term duck" was not mentioned. But the two generals, Aglipay became a term duck when it was announced last September that as PNP chief, he was being recommended for only six months.

* * *

This brings me once again to the issue of chief turnover the AFP chief and the senior commanders. The only indication that something was underlying him. Video said, was some disinformation the would drive around in circles, unable to find the villages and end the ring of his speech.

I left a note to Video, "Dear Tarantasyosa, when I first met to see of the motorcar rallies against the blatant dictatorship in the early 1960s. When he found out I was a journalist he took off with me. Video, you are the only one press—he treated me with wild jokes and outrageous rumors. I left the rally, wondering who this guy really was.

I wasn't an all-surprised when he was given a post in the next grade. Years, for Carlos never struck me with the need he displayed to right the wrongs of the Marcos regime.

After receiving from the Ombudsman, Carlos received and a note calling by sending the tanks of Intramuros to the Malacañang. Today, from an active commentator, he managed to keep his endowment anytime see and services. He seemed pleased when I told him I looked forward to reading his poems. As a friend and a reader of his columns, I will miss his lines.

* * *

"FIFTY MEN of nations building bridges with one and it begins today." This is the motto of a group of women who work to promote nationhood in peace. From the United States to the Philippines, "...for our sake, let us unite, let us build up our people. For a country is not made up of roads, bridges and structures but a country is made up of people. Lack of hate, lack of hope and lack of purpose destroy a people. But as we build up our people, we build a nation."

Not now, the main reason why each through which the women hope to spread the gospel of national spirit and common purpose is through the sacred art, plays and theater. Madam Ito Nagano Ito Ando, from spreading their message, the plan also serve a good cause—funding livelihood projects for our marginalized senior citizens through the Philippine Retirement Authority. If you want to hear more about these message plan, you can call Sol Sinpia at 725-8605 or Evelyn Khayin at 631-5480/6017.

A man in the news

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

TARLAC this week, there was a "breaking news" item on a TV newscast: a news crew passing by Commonwealth's terrace, were spotted by other had overturned on the overpass and had burst into flames.

Though a crowd of bystanders that had quickly gathered round the burning car saw someone inside, no one thought to go near to free the driver from the wreck. It was only when the police and fire personnel arrived that the flames that were able to pull out the victim. But it was too late by then. The driver, who was about to be cut, was dead.

I remember pleading silently in the TV that the burning car not be the one in which I had my wife aboard of the poor driver was a victim of his action. But even then it was a disturbing sight as the television ashes of the victim's charred appeared to have just totally melted.

The newscast carried the accident fatality's name, but it didn't strike a chord. About the most significant detail I remember was that he was just a year older than me.

But funny (well, not really) how a news item, the death of which would be given no thought at all, can arouse attention and a range of sympathy for the dead man's family, is extremely unjust with significant when a personal connection is made.

The leading victim in Tarlac, it turned out, was the father of a friend from college. While I didn't see Antonio Abila or not just a distant relative, don't a friend from childhood. Since the Lukayen home in Cubao was just a street away from ours, and Mila and her sister Maying were roughly the same age as me, my sister Choto and I would either walk the short distance to their home to the company of our papa, or they would come to our home and there join us in our perennial "grown-up" games.

PERHAPS our Mama and our Tita Nora Lukayen found it amazing that their daughters would develop a fast friendship in the face-to-face of their own dissimilar relationship: their mothers had been friends.

The Lukayens, in fact, are very much part of the warp-and-woof of our family fabric: it was Tita Beth Lukayen who was responsible for introducing my father to my mother. Tita Beth and Tita Nora married at about the same time as my parents, and held the same number of children. It is also through the friendship between the Jimenez and Lukayen children would blossom through our childhood.

Some years back, I heard that Mila, who was by then a vice president of a local bank, had emigrated to the United States with her family. She, though, had been assigned to Fern by Bank, an international development NGO, though he had applied for a transfer to New York after the Pinatubo mess.

According to their eldest child who had stayed behind in Manila to finish her medical studies, "she had flown to Iloilo Pena for a week-long stint, mainly to attend to high administrative and also to visit his family. Since Mila was exposed to parties from the United States, she arrived last night, the wake at the Fillmore Chapel was overseen by the Antezas and Lukayen families as well as by the daughter's classmates at UP Diliman. The plane arrived at 10:30 p.m. and a delegation for it to a rented the two-hour one-hour fare, which we once thought had found due to distance and time.

* * *

MY personal condolences also go to family of the late Bangkingan Pervading Junior Pastor Gutierrez, who passed away Friday evening.

Shortly after being diagnosed with brain cancer, Bangkingan who studied in the Makati Medical Center, flew the evening, was kicked by Bishop Jesus Dosmariñas and thereafter by Archbishop Oscar Cruz. According to his wife Vicky, Gutierrez had displayed an outward composure before his hospitalization.

Chinoy experience

LAST Sunday, out of curiosity, I watched the championship game of the Inhalan Federation of the Philippines at the Philippine Sports Commission building in Ermita, Manila. The participants came from the organization's chapters in different parts of the country.

For the uninitiated, wushu (which translates to "martial arts") is a sport that originated from China and involves the snappy movements of the arms and legs. Exercises as a means of self-defense, it requires body flexibility and physical endurance.

It will be one of the events in the Southeast Asian Games that will be held in the country next December. Its inclusion was a victory for wushu enthusiasts who have been lobbying to make sport included in the Olympic Games it will host in 2008.

Considering the sport's roots, I was not surprised when I saw the predominance of Chinese-Filipinos in the contestants. The athletes' ages were in the 7- to 16-year-old brackets. Anybody older was either a member of the coaching staff or a parent. Most of the kids were girls and the kind of complexion they rated, it was apparent the Chinese were of the upper middle and middle-class type.

There were only two indications of Chinese influences in the event. One was the traditional dragon dance that formed up the audience as it awaited the start of the contests, and second were the Chinese characters in the organizer's memento (other among the beautiful Filipino flag placed next descriptive information in the brochure of the activity.

Communication

While waiting for the proceedings to begin, the people milled in each other about their routine and the preparations they made to reach the finals. Since the crowd was mostly Chinoy, I was under the impression that the medium of communication among them would be Chinese.

In many of the social gatherings I have attended before where there were a lot of Chinoys, I observed that they conversed in Chinese whenever they were by themselves. But it was different this time they talked in Pilipino.

The Chinoy youngsters conversed with each other and their Filipino counterparts in Tagalog, with Filipino as the dominant language of communication. Like those of today's teenagers, they talked fast and spirited. Their accent had some of the corrupted style of talking that our local movies often use to portray Chinoys.

The few Chinese words I overheard were about wushu movements that, not surprisingly, are described in their original Chinese names. There's even translation because it's difficult to make an equivalent in English or Pilipino. Besides, the Chinese words carry a certain ring that sets it to the meanings of the martial arts-related sports.

The athlete in the group were no different from the younger ones. They talked and joked in the national language. I did not get the impression that they were doing that to order not to call attention to themselves and... if I were to classify their accents, I would say that they had mixed feelings. Some talkers (I mean) and sounded, it looked to me that their use of Pilipino was natural or part of their daily interaction within their families.

Interaction

I also did not sense any feeling of inner rivalry among the contestants. The team members helped each other in their warm-up routines and cheered for one another. Chinoy siblings who are not as experienced in the sport, give pointers to ex-Filipino athletes belonged to another team on how to perform a difficult wushu movement.

The crowd hushed up immediately when the master, and, it awarded gestures and Olympian Ben Lucero, announced the playing of the National Anthem to signal the start of the contest. Everybody rose up to attention to the strains of the flag. Some struggled to sing along. I felt the effort was an achievement by itself.

Unlike the behavior I have seen in some of the games of the Philippine Basketball Association, the audience kept still while the audience was being played. Many of the teenagers placed their right hand on the upper left portion of their chests. Their eyes were focused on the flag and the singer. The audience took their cues only when the music came to a complete stop.

The competition was intense. The contestants went through their routines seriously. The audience rooted for its team. The game marshals did not have to remind them to keep quiet during the athletes' performances. Cold and heat may have affected the athletes' performance with good physical conditioning and concentration.

The players applauded whenever any of them got good ratings from the judges. There was none of the over-spirited pep rally that we often see in sports competitions in our schools. The Chinoy cheered when their Filipino teammates were able to complete difficult movements; the latter reciprocated the cheer whenever the opponents committed a self.

Good relations

The camaraderie I saw that day reminded me of a recent soccer game held in Beijing. China between Chinese and Japanese teams. The predominantly Chinese crowd jeered at demand spoken in the Japanese players in an effort to prevent them from concentrating on the game.

The racial characters of those screens was unmistakable that the Japanese sports officials complained to their Chinese counterparts. Until the Chinese authorities are able to control the behavior of their crowds, it may take some time before another Japanese soccer team goes to China to compete with the home teams.

I was glad that during those wushu celebrations incidents in Beijing happened in the wushu crowds that Sunday afternoon. When the judges announced the winners, there was genuine jubilation among the contestants. Both winners and losers whipped it up and sang unabated unbroken for their efforts. Unless I missed it, I did not see any unfavorable the scenes be spoken any Filipino complaints that has sometimes influenced the judges' actions in this region's Chinese sports.

The friendships created among the participants that day were sealed, as today's young and low-or young are wont to do, by exchanging cell phone numbers. Those who had cell phones with phone capabilities had their pictures taken and stored in each other's phones.

If the friendships that this afternoon was a harbinger of things to come, I have every reason to be optimistic about the meaningful assimilation of Chinese-Filipinos in our society.

Education and poverty

PUBLIC LIVES

Ramon Tuazon

SOMETIME during the Christmas holidays, 15-year-old Dinah asked me if I needed someone to look after the birds orchard I was running at the foot of Mt. Makiling in Batangas. I remembered Dinah as a sprightly teenager who helped around in my brother's garden. Slightly deaf because of chronic ear infection, he had quit school after Grade 4. Now he has to learn his partner home, but the study and the lessons he has just taken a while. Dinah's parents were both dead, and she had given up to school after finishing Grade 4. Besides her grandparents, she had no other family around to my brother's garden. Slightly deaf because of chronic ear infection, he had quit school after Grade 4. Now he has to learn his partner home, but the study and the lessons he has just taken a while. Dinah's parents were both dead, and she had given up to school after finishing Grade 4. Besides her grandparents, she had no other family around to

Fifteen-year-old Arceg, his wife, also stopped going to school after finishing Grade 4. Besides the distance from their home to the nearest high school, this is a minor detail in this war-torn young couple. They have not even got married, but they will soon be starting a family, cultivating the same type of poverty, insufficient education, nasty marriage and long child-bearing years. Arceg's father, being irregular work—that does not pay—has been disenchanted.

There is no real way out of this cycle without a decisive intervention in education. Study after study has shown that the higher the level of education of the head of the family, the higher the family income. A simple quantitative rise in the level of educational attainment of Filipino families would produce a dramatic effect on poverty rates, especially in the rural areas. But more important, it would also produce the far more profound transformation in world view and life-style that even a good education can trigger.

Many years ago, the late President Jaime Laurel of Tanzania visited the Philippines. Mwalimu, as he was fondly called by his own people, spoke to a forum at the University of the Philippines. I remember one particular question he was asked. What would you regard as the most crucial element in Tanzania's development program? His quick unequivocal answer surprised everyone. The education of our young women.

I suppose this response is the same of what surprised the Philippines. Mwalimu, as he was fondly called by his own people, spoke to a forum at the University of the Philippines. I remember one particular question he was asked. What would you regard as the most crucial element in Tanzania's development program? His quick unequivocal answer surprised everyone. The education of our young women.

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to [illegible]

Editor Juan F. Sarmiento Jr.

Getting to know you (and how!)

FILIPINOS have consistently rejected the idea of a national identification card. In a historic act, Andres Bonifacio and the Katipuneros tore up their *cedulas* in August 1896. The *cedula personal*, equivalent to the present community residence tax, was a symbol of vassalage to Spain. The tearing up of this Spanish identification document marked the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution.

The short-lived First Philippine Republic led by Emilio Aguinaldo also imposed a form of identification certificate and taxation called *contribucion personal*. But Filipinos found this odious as it was considered a relic of the Spanish colonial rule.

Also unpopular were the residence certificates imposed during the Japanese Occupation and the attempts by President Ferdinand Marcos to come up with a national identification card.

Marcos, who had a penchant for employing instruments for surveillance on citizens to ensure political control, reportedly tried to adopt a national ID project similar to a counter-insurgency program developed by the US Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnam, which required the registration of all Vietnamese 15 years of age and above and the issuance of ID cards to them.

Filipino presidents after Marcos have also flirted with the idea of a national ID. But they, too, had not been successful. For instance, then President Fidel Ramos issued in 1996 an administrative order establishing a national identification system for Filipinos and foreign residents but was rebuffed by the Supreme Court in 1998. The tribunal said the order would put the citizens' right to privacy "in clear and present danger" and usurp the legislative function of Congress. (*PDI Research*)

The Supreme Court said the collection of "personal information constitutes a covert invitation or entrance, a temptation that may be too great for some of our authorities to resist."

Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo is reviving her proposal for Congress to pass a bill setting up a national ID system following the Feb. 14 bombings in the cities of Makati, General Santos and Davao.

Filipinos already have a surfeit of IDs—SSS ID, GSIS eCard, PhilHealth card, driver's license, PRC ID, Taxpayer's Identification Number, Voter's ID, Postal ID, yellow card (if one lives in Makati), and office ID, among others. They may not welcome another ID, which the government could use to snoop on them.

Identification cards of Filipinos

SSS ID

A Social Security System ID bears a member's photo, name, birth date and signature, as well as the SSS ID number. It is primarily used in loanee applications for salary loans and benefits for sickness, disability, maternity, death and retirement.

At the back of the ID is a machine-readable magnetic strip that gives the cardholder access to his or her records with the agency after keying in a four-digit PIN number. It may be swiped in information kiosks operated by the SSS in malls.

The ID also helps facilitate transactions with banks, hospitals, health care providers and other government agencies.

Under the Social Security Act of 1997, SSS membership is compulsory for private employees, whether permanent, temporary, provisional or self-employed, who are not over 60 years old. Household helpers, seafarers, and employees of foreign organizations or governments should also be covered. Children below 15 years of age are also subject to compulsory coverage.

To date, about 32 million SSS IDs have been issued by the agency since November 1998. Not all members are entitled to an ID, however. The members should make at least one monthly contribution to the agency before he or she may be issued a card. As of March 2004, membership in the SSS is as follows: employees, 7.5[illegible]; employers, 2[illegible]; and self-employed, 4[illegible].

GSIS eCard

The GSIS eCard displays a member's name, picture and 10-character license to transact business with the agency's [illegible] having to line up at its offices.

GSIS introduced the electronic ID system in September 2004 to replace its old card. As of January 2005, about 200,000 GSIS members had received their IDs out of about 1.4 million government employees.

Members can also flash their application or benefit claims at the kiosks set up in malls, with their e-cards, withdraw their loans or benefits from automated teller machines of [illegible] and Landbank.

The GSIS ID is used to speed up transactions with the agency such as application for loans and claims for life insurance, retirement and other benefits. Members may also use the card as a debit card in establishments that accept Visa and Mastercard.

One is eligible for GSIS membership if he or she is an appointive or elective official receiving fixed compensation, or a permanent, substitute, temporary, casual or contractual employee with employer-employee relationship; a member of the judiciary or a constitutional commissioner, and receiving basic salary but not per diems, honoraria or allowances.

The GSIS has a total of 1,434,845 active members, categorized as follows: national agencies, 685,018; local government units, 395,461; Department of Education, 334,773; and government-owned and controlled corporations, 99,593.

PhilHealth card

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation bears the member's name, signature and his or her permanent PhilHealth number. It does not have the cardholder's photo, and so is not used for identification but for verification purposes only.

It is used in PhilHealth transactions such as inpatient and hospital care, and other programs under the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP).

The program covers employed members both in the government and private sector; individually paying members—self-employed, overseas Filipino workers and professionals in private practice; non-paying members—retirees and pensioners of the GSIS and SSS; members who have reached the age of retirement and have paid at least 120 monthly contributions; and indigent members under the component of the NHIP.

Senior citizen's ID

Older and frailer now a senior citizen's ID is a resident who is at least 60 years old. The ID bears the senior citizen's name, age, address and date of issuance.

The ID entitles the cardholder to a number of privileges such as a 20-percent discount from all establishments, including eateries, restaurants and hotels, and a 20-percent discount to transport fare.

Driver's license

It is unlawful for a person to operate a motor vehicle without having in his possession a valid driver's license.

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) issues licenses to motorists. For nonprofessional licenses, the applicant must be at least 17 years old and had undergone at least a month of driving instructions. A professional license applicant must be at least 18 years old and had undergone driving instruction at least five months.

A driver's license serves as verification that the holder has passed the driver's exam given by the LTO. A license contains the photo of the holder, complete name, email address, birth date, sex, height, weight, nationality, validity, license number and the restrictions and conditions imposed on the holder by the LTO.

PRC license/ID

The Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC) administers, implements and enforces regulatory policies for 42 professions.

Once would-be professionals pass their respective board exams and registered themselves with the Commission, they will be given their license certificate and PRC ID. The PRC ID serves as identification card proof that the holder is a registered professional.

The name of the professional, registration number, registration date, validity and [illegible] are the information on the PRC ID. Professionals sign their signature at the back of the ID. They need to renew their ID every three years.

TIN

The Taxpayer's Identification Number (TIN) ID is issued by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to employees and business owners. The ID contains the 9-digit TIN, photo, the complete name, birthday, address, the date when the ID was issued and signature of the holder. TIN IDs are valid for life.

Application and issuance of the IDs are concentrated by the BIR's various revenue district offices. Aside from serving as proper identification for tax purposes, business establishments such as banks require TIN IDs for certain transactions.

Voter's ID

Information found on the Voter's ID includes photo, the right thumb mark, the complete name, birth date, civil status, citizenship, address, precinct number and signature of the voter, also contained in the ID is the municipality and province of the voter, and the voter's identification number.

For the 2004 elections, the Commission on Elections underwent a revitalization procedure for voters in an attempt to computerize the voter's list and bring new Voter's ID system. The new IDs should have been used in the 2004 Elections but a lot of the voters did not receive their IDs from their respective barangays before the elections.

Postal ID

The Postal Identity Card or *Liham Identidad* is used as proof of identity for post office business. It is popular among Filipinos going abroad as this can be used as identification in addition to a passport. The ID is recognized abroad by members of the Universal Postal Union.

At 7 inches by 10 cms, the Postal ID card is bigger than the size of most IDs. It contains a bigger photo of the holder, too.

The obverse contains the surname, forename, occupation, nationality, address and the holder's signature. The reverse has the date and place of birth, date of issuance, height, color of hair and eyes, complexion and special marks; all these items have their French equivalent like nom de famille for surname, prénom for forename, domicile for address, etc.

The Postal ID is issued by the postmaster or the manager of any post office in the country.

Employment is not a requisite to get a Postal ID. But the application form requires a reference who can vouch for the identity of the applicant. This form has to be notarized. Application fee is P150.

Residence certificate

The Individual Community Tax Certificate is more commonly known as residence certificate or cedula. It is required of every resident of town or city who is 18 years old or over and who has been regularly employed on a salary basis for at least 60 consecutive working days or who is engaged in business or occupation, or who is required by law to file an income tax return.

The cedula contains the name (surname, first, middle), sex, citizenship and Alien Certificate of Registration for foreigners, place of birth, date of birth, height, weight, civil status, community tax due and paid.

It is required when one acknowledges a document before a notary public, takes the oath of office upon election or appointment to any position in government, receives a license, certificate, or permit from a public authority, pays a tax or fee, receives money from any public fund, transacts other official business, or receives a salary or wage from a person or corporation.

Yellow card

Makati City's health program, popularly known as the yellow card, was conceptualized as a benefit and not as an identification card.

The yellow card program was conceptualized in 1998 to provide Makati residents with monthly incomes below P10,000 access to quality health care, festive citizens and city government employees like public school teachers, policemen, and firemen are also included in the program.

Card holders could avail themselves of the following services at the Ospital ng Makati: surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics, medicine, otorhinolaryngology (ears, nose and throat), ophthalmology, dermatology and orthopedics.

Last year, the city government allotted P365,000,000 for the program.

The Makati Health Program Office has approved of 297,180 yellow-card holders from 1988, until October 2003. Around 65,000 qualified residents were given yellow cards as of February 2005.

The yellow card has two types: the family card and the solo card. Legitimate residents of Makati with spouses and children, including government employees, household, and senior citizens with spouses 70 years old and below can qualify for the family card.

Single residents, senior citizens, government employees who are non-residents of Makati, livingtogether, fulltime officers and single household can avail themselves of the solo card.

Information stored in the yellow card includes the name, address, birthday and classification of the holder. (*With research and blurbs by Chris Ocbia*)

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Abrogueña

CAGAYAN VIOLENCE

Vice mayor held in ambush on mayor

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Police on Friday arrested the vice mayor of Lasam, Cagayan, after he was tagged as the mastermind in the foiled ambush on Lasam Mayor Eulogio Agarap Jr. on Feb. 16.

Agarap was wounded while two others, including Agarap's 7-year-old nephew, were killed in the ambush.

Senior Supt. James Andrew Melad, Cagayan police director, said Lasam Vice Mayor Bernito Concino was arrested at the Civil Service Commission compound here while going out of the mayor's P4,000, supposedly as partial payment for the hit job.

Melad said they arrested on Thursday Jose Alex Estibano Jr., a former army sergeant who was on parole, for his participation in the ambush.

Solfano, who was arrested through a warrant issued by Judge Benigno Cortez of the Lasam Municipal Trial Court, yielded a .45-cal. pistol.

In Lasam, some 2,000 residents, residents and local government officials marched on Wednesday to demand justice for the killing of Agarap's nephew, Jeffrey, and solicited for the speedy arrest of Concino and Estibano.

Agarap, who lost the only living scion of his family in the ambush, appealed for sobriety and called on those responsible for the attempt to "stop their evil plans for the sake of the town."

After wounding during the ambush, were Agarap's son, Eulogio III, the mayor's brother Jesse and SPO2 Florito Rapo.

In turn, authorities are investigating the possible involvement of politicians in private armies that had been tagged responsible for killings in the province. Willamor Flores Jr. and Leonardo Calibo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Laoag mayor says pols behind raps he shot vice mayor

LAOAG City Mayor Michael Fariñas said he could expect political clout in the Bloom regime, behind the charges against Councilor Melvin de la Cuesta, the supposed eyewitness to the Feb. 2 killing of Vice Mayor Jimmy Chua.

In a statement sent to the local press, Fariñas vehemently denied allegations by De la Cuesta that he shot Chua to death inside the Eagle's Nest Restaurant and Bar early dawn of Feb. 2.

Fariñas said he was informed that a case "involving powerful political clan in Ilocos was instrumental in convincing De la Cuesta to retract his earlier statement that a hired killer shot Chua in front of the Eagle's Nest Restaurant.

"Apparently this powerful political clan is out to destroy me for reasons they alone know. I can only surmise that there was money and threat involved in the retraction of Councilor De la Cuesta," Fariñas said.

He that, however, refused to identify the "powerful political clan" in the statement but assured media sources he has gathered enough evidence that he being fabbed in the Chua killing is politically motivated.

"I do not harbor any ill feelings toward De la Cuesta for I know that he is under intense pressure from his political clan. If only he had a choice, De la Cuesta would not have signed the document linking me to the gruesome killing," Fariñas said.

In his original statement given to police investigators, De la Cuesta pointed to a gunman identified as "alias Steve" of Ilocos Sur as the one who shot Chua in front of the Eagle's Nest Restaurant.

De la Cuesta said the gunman ran with another unidentified suspect on board a motorcycle after the shooting happened.

"When he [Chua] told me that we should go home, we went to the toilet to relieve ourselves and he went on first. When I went out of the toilet, I heard a single gunshot after which I heard the sound of a motorcycle. I went out and saw a motorcycle moving away and then motioned at Ilocos Sur and I saw Vice Mayor Jimmy Chua sprawled on the ground," De la Cuesta said in his statement.

But De la Cuesta said he even managed to take a look at the face of the gunman, which became the basis for the drawing that he gave the cartographer from the Criminal and Detection Group.

De la Cuesta was also able to identify the suspected gunman from a police "gallery" containing the photographs of criminals in the Ilocos Region.

In the meantime, five men—reports of the National Bureau of Investigation have found traces of blood at the restaurant table where Lasag Mayor Michael Farinas was sitting when he allegedly shot dead Vice Mayor Jimmy Chua earlier this month.

NBI chief Reynaldo Wycoco said De la Cuesta came out to tell the truth upon the prodding of his family, NBI agents and the police. —With a report from Leila Salaverria

GMA asked to appoint Kapampangan to Clark post

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Local officials and businessmen in Pampanga have urged their fellow Kapampanganon, President Macapagal-Arroyo, to appoint a Kapampangan as president of the Clark Development Corp.

Gov. Mark Lapid and Rep. Reynaldo Aquino, in separate statements on Thursday, clamored for a Kapampangan president at the CDC, the government body overseeing the development of the former Clark Air Base into a special economic zone.

Businessmen led by Alex David have sought the same following the resignation of CDC president Emmanuel Angeles effective March 31.

In their statements, Rep. did not endorse any replacement for Angeles but stressed how and they were supporting local businessmen and former Bases Conversion Development Authority Director Levy Laus.

Laus has built a successful business conglomerate in car sales, insurance and food. His allies have touted him as the next CDC president amid reports circulating that Laus is being considered for replacement.

In joint interviews, Laus disputed such reports.

Saying the announcement of his resignation last week, Angeles told reporters that Mrs. Arroyo had asked him to stay in CDC president and chief executive officer "for as long as he wants."

Angeles said he prefers to return to the academe as president of the locally-owned Angeles University Foundation in Angeles City.

Like Aquino, Lapid said a Kapampangan is the best person to head the "CDC because other persons understands the dynamics of local politics and governments and could thus ensure the parallel development of towns and cities around Clark.

Lapid said "only a Kapampangan could truly understand" the manner of his countrymates on the full operations of the Honolulu Municipal International Airport, also in Clark. —Teodoro Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Cordillera to hold more festivals in meningo wake

BAGUIO CITY—Cordillera officials said they will hold more cultural festivals to recover from losses caused by the meningococcemia scare.

An officials and residents are celebrating the Abbey Festival in Mountain Province, the Pineapple Festival in Itogon, Mt. Province is preparing to hold the Lang-ay Festival, the first tourism extravaganza at Bontoc in the province, in April.

A grand cultural festival dubbed Imbayah will be held in Baguio city in April.

In a press forum on Thursday, members of the Regional Development Council said they are optimistic that festivals such as the Imbayah will bring in more tourists to the region.

Due to the meningococcemia scare, the Department of Tourism in Cordillera recorded income losses of P12 million weekly in tourism in Baguio.

Earlier, DOT Regional Director Purificacion Molintas said the losses only represented the average spender expenditures at P5,000 per person per day.

To recover losses, officials are actively promoting tourist destinations in Cordillera after Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano presented a P1 million check to the Baguio tourism council and the Benguet provincial tourism council.

Promotion

Part of the funds will be used to promote festivals in Baguio and Benguet, Durano said.

The promotional fund will also cover TV commercials, print advertisements that will feature Baguio and Benguet as destinations of tourists.

Baguio and Benguet are one of the favorite tourist destinations in the country along with Subic, Cebu, Leyte, Ifugao, Manila, Tagaytay, Davao, Siargao, Palawan, Boracay, Cebu, Bohol, Camiguin, Siquijor, Davao and Zamboanga.

Tourists said 2004 was a bad year year for Philippine tourism after it recorded an all time high of 3,200,000 tourist arrivals.

Cordillera had an average income of P1,000 daily tourist in the 1,200,000 tourist arrivals every year.

Twin objectives

Thomas Killip, presidential assistant for Cordillera Affairs, said the twin objectives of the festivals in the region would not only enhance the tourism industry of Baguio City but also of the Cordillera.

Killip, a former mayor of Baguio, Mt. Province said the staging of the festivals annually will show the region is safe from any deadly disease.

Mt. Province's tourist arrivals were also affected by reports on meningococcemia. Hotel guides and hotel and restaurants owners in Bontoc said they noticed a decline in tourist arrivals after the reports.

Lour Dacanay, assistant regional director of National Economic and Development Authority, said the RDC is studying socio-cultural conditions in regional which would cover Baguio, La Trinidad, Itogon, Sabangan and Tuba in Benguet.

Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog, also RDC chair, said they are now ready for the leap on tourism that will kick off in January the governor's capitol, to attract more tourists.

The festival will also promote the local agricultural industry, he said. Beatrice Cobcob, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BENGUET FISH
A vendor shows off two big-head siapus that are grown in Benguet during the Abbey Festival held at the Benguet State University in La Trinidad town.

Solon vows fight to keep doctors' fees VAT-exempt

HACIAS

SORSOGON CITY—Sorsogon Official Rep. Emilio Macias II has vowed to oppose moves to lift the value-added tax exemption (VAT) of professional fees of doctors because doing so will only mean additional burden to the patients.

"I am against the lifting of the exemption, not because I am a doctor but because of the effect of this on patients," said Macias, House committee chair on local government.

He, however, had voted in favor of increasing the VAT by two percent although he registered strong opposition to the lifting of the exemption on professional fees of doctors.

Macias said patients would end up paying the VAT once the exemptions were lifted.

"I am not defending the doctors but the patients. The amount a person is ill and increase uncertain of his future or is fighting between life and death, he cannot compute for insurance and will be forced to pay includ ing the VAT," he said.

Macias said another possibility would be the increase in fees as patient would just agree that payment be made without a receipt to avoid paying the VAT.

"It is possible that the doctor will propose to the patient that in order to avoid paying a much higher doctor's fee due to VAT, the physician will not issue a receipt. So no receipt, no VAT and no income tax," Macias said.

The government should intercept doctors because there are some who do not declare their actual income, he added.

In Cebu City, a group was formed to campaign for the scrapping of the bill that seeks to increase VAT by two percent.

About 1,000 members of the Opposition in Cebu (Mass) marched in the streets to express their opposition to House Bill 3555.

"In the light of the commemoration of the 1986 Edsa People Power, we declare that President Macapagal-Arroyo's aggressive promotion of her economic reform as VAT is contrary to what People Power stood for," the group said.

The Mass is composed of at least 30 people's and nongovernment organizations and party-list groups.

The group vowed to initiate a series of education campaign on the effect of the proposed increase and expansion of VAT and questioned Cebu's action in Cebu. Bobby Timonera and Juliane F. Balbiedar, PDI Visayas Bureau

Continued manganese mining in Vizcaya alarms ecology group

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

QUEZON, Nueva Vizcaya—Small-scale miners continued to dig up manganese ore at an upland reforestation project in Barangay Bonfacio here despite the lack of a permit from the provincial government, the Bantay Kalikasan said on Friday.

Members of the Save the Valley, Save the People Alliance for the Environment (Save), an environment watchdog on Friday discovered Peddy contracted manganese deposits and hundreds of sacks containing mined ore stockpiled at the site in Sitio Buhbuhangi.

"With what we have seen here today, there is no doubt that [the miners] have been operating without a permit," said Jun Estevez, chair of the committee on environment of the Bagabag town council and convener of Save.

Save members also found digging tools and heavy equipment at the site which, they said, might have been abandoned miners before the arrival of the group.

The mining operation by manganese by the Kalikasan Reforestation Association Inc. (KRAI) was stopped after Gov. Luisa Cuaresma on Jan. 26 issued a cease-and-desist order. The provincial government stopped the operation after the DMG was found to have violated its quarry permit.

Cuaresma said she has not renewed the permit for the KRAI.

Conflicting statements

While caught by surprise, miners at the site gave conflicting statements. Some KRAI members denied that mining operations were ongoing.

"What [the group] saw were manganese ore that were dug up prior to the issuance of the cease-and-desist order," the have always abided by and will always abide with that order," said a miner.

However, Rolando Sarian, KRAI mining foreman, said they continued to extract manganese deposits manually. He said they had stopped using heavy equipment for their operation.

Alone 50 of the original 150 KRAI miners had opted to remain in the mining site in anticipation of the lifting of the order and renewal of the permit by Cuaresma, Sarian said.

The miners said they were being paid P250 for every sack of manganese ore extracted.

Living with families

Some of them lived with their families in about 20 huts just across the mining site entrance.

Arthur Sibal Dary were doing in the area while waiting for the permit, a miner said: "Nothing, just just mine."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources earlier ordered KRAI to pay at least P99,000 as fine for destroying some 3,000 pinetree trees within the reforestation area.

"I won't be surprised if KRAI continued with its operations. That's why I immediately moved," he insisted that the governor issue a small-scale [mining] permit," said Armand Mangasong, regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

"You saw the area. If they were nothing to panic about. It is beyond the environmental measures [needed] to put in place, let's leave those poor miners alone," he said.

Permit in a week

Mangasong said he was expecting Cuaresma to sign the permit by next week.

In Sagpaminan town, church groups and local officials launched the Save on Friday to protest the illegal mining projects in the province.

Bro. Amadeo Rossi, chair of the Cagayan Valley Regional Secretariat Assembly, said the alliance aims to rally all sectors to act and demand for the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the Cagayan River, the country's largest river, in response to the studies of the affected communities. With a report from Ben Rhoan Ebreo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Bicol, Pampanga, Quezon tagged priorities in geo-hazard map

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has placed the Bicol provinces, Pampanga and Quezon on the priority areas of geo-hazard mapping which commences this year, according to an executive of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Israel Jose, chief geologist of MGB in Bicol, said yesterday that the President had ordered the three-year completion of the geo-hazard map with a scale of 1:10,000 not only to improve the quality of the mapping, but also its effectively come up with a comprehensive land-use plan.

The government is making the geo-hazard mapping of the Philippines by zoning to complete in just less than four years in three more beginning this year, Jose added.

He said six years were devoted too long because, he said, many geological incidents could occur in the Philippines within a three-year period.

Early last week, the Bicol region experienced a mild earthquake that shook several places, almost on the same day a powerful earthquake devastated Iran.

The MGB, an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, is the government agency mandated to identify and regulate mineral resources and conduct geological studies and other studies on Philippine geology.

Jose said the MGB is expected to prepare a geo-hazard map that delineates the fault, identifies areas where flooding and possible landslides occur, identifies areas susceptible to storm surge and quite tsunami-prone areas.

He said the selection of the priority areas was based on population and the size of the population. Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Flowers seen as bridge to North Korea

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Beauty queen-turned-actress Bella Sanchez has floated a new role as a bridge for two Korean prizes that could help tackle reconciliation of the Baguio Flower Festival.

Sanchez is introducing the flower breeds "Kim Jong Il" and "Kim Il Sung" to Baguio and Benguet flower producers. Jong Il is a North Korean leader and Sung Ilkwon's close ties grew in large in a corner table. It was named after the current North Korean president.

"It's actually called a Kim Jong Il in," said Sanchez.

She said Il Sung (or Kim Il-sung) is a North Korean orchid that was cultivated in the premier Sungkwan, in honor of North Korea's founder and Jong Il's father, Kim Il-sung.

The flower breeds were introduced during North Korea's 50th founding anniversary in 1998, she said.

Sanchez said the flowers could remain the bridge that United States President George W. Bush used to outwhen he declared North Korea part of an "axis of evil" three years ago following the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

Ties

The Philippines, a member of the US-led coalition of the willing, has cultivated ties with North Korea, Sanchez said.

She said Philippine and North Korean ties have not gone anywhere beyond their initial view of cooperation, and efforts are being made by the Philippine Embassy in Pyongyang, the public of Korea Friendship Assn) to "stimulate and exchanges" between the two countries.

Sanchez, founding president of the society, said North Korean flowers exports are due to visit the Cordillera on flower events in March to promote their country's floral treasures.

Logical

She said the city's flower festival was a logical destination to introduce Kim Jong-Ilo and Kim Il-sungin, but North Koreans are also drawn to the city because of its huge migrant Korean population.

Many of the Baguio-based Koreans have relatives in North Korea and that is a bond they intend to return, Sanchez said.

The Korean population in the city comes from South Korea, according to the Bureau of Immigration. Many are students, who go seasonally to the city to learn English or to enroll in the city's universities.

But the Koreans are not being marketed in the local flower community, Sanchez said.

"These blossoms are ripe for the Philippine [market], and I think Benguet's flower industry should pay a first crack at [marketing," she said.

ISLAND DEAL
Mariveles City Mayor Hermenio Benggacia, Philippine Tourism Authority chair Robert Dean Barbers and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor gesture after entering into an agreement to revitalize the Montemar Islands in Pangasinan as a premier tourist destination and, at the same time, preserve its ecology

INQUIRER Mindanao

E-mail us at ... @inquirer.com.ph
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Nina A. Alvarado

Group justifies violence in Christ's name

By Jill B. Dennis
Cagayan de Oro City

SAYING they will refuse even the help of court-appointed lawyers, 17 members of a group calling itself the Jesus Christ Followers (JCF) insist that they will let their stubborn defiend them in court.

The members, six of them aged 11 to 19 years old, were brought to the Gandula Detention and Rehabilitation Center here a cramped cell inside the police compound in Cagayan de Oro City. They were arrested last month after a clash with policemen, but each of them released in post 75,000 to bail, opting for another showdown with authorities.

The JCF members remain obstinate, defiant, asserting threats have left its resolve, just like when they did during preliminary investigation proceedings at the Hall of Justice on Feb. 1.

Senior Supt. Nemesio Cervantes, city police chief, said the detainees would be charged with direct assault. They could face other charges pending completion of the police investigation of the incident, he said.

"We will turn this country upside down," said Emilinda Tinagco, owner of the JCF School and one of those arrested.

Tinagco said her group would see the authorities in court and would showcase their students' brilliance as proof of the school's superior academic standards by letting the six students handle their defense.

MOMBERS of the JCF in jail in Lumbia, Cagayan de Oro City

'Garbage' prosecutors

Sneering at the prospect of meeting with court-appointed lawyers and calling the state prosecutors "garbage," Tinagco said she was confident that these members, though lacking in legal training, would put the prosecutors to shame.

"We demand that every case [they have] against the JCF be reopened and we demand a public trial," she said, presuming Erwin's letter to be the norm.

Calling themselves modern-day apostles of Jesus Christ, the JCF aims for a curious mix of spiritual and secular aspirations. The school was established in 1994 by Tinagco and her husband Emelio, former Manila fight workers.

Convinced that the solution to the financial difficulties of the average Filipino is to find work abroad, Emelio said they were driven by the desire to provide people with the means, through education, to that end. "But and the competition to spread an unusual interpretation of the Bible.

No cult

"We are not a cult," Emelio said, adding that they are all equals and there are no commander-figures among them.

Though lacking in established religious doctrines, Emelio said there is more of a spontaneous Christianity, a way of life based on their interpretation of the Bible.

But contrary to the conventional Christian doctrine of loving your enemies, the JCF finds turning the other cheek all hogwash. It believes Jesus Christ was a violent, as well as a merciless, man-god.

And violence, in response to oppression or perceived oppression, is justified, according to the group's interpretation of the Bible. This partly explains its stubborn resistance to authorities.

Wielding steel pipes, sticks, rocks and banana sweetsword wrapped in plastic, JCF members fought policemen on Jan. 28, leaving three officers injured. There is two JCF members, many of whom suffered injuries, were arrested.

Student refuge

The confrontation was triggered by the refusal of school officials to hand over one of their students, a 16-year-old, to her parents. The girl had sought refuge inside the school compound, where several of the teachers also reside, after quarreling with her parents.

School officials repeatedly refused to release the child to relatives, prompting the parents to seek the help of authorities.

Fourteen students, aged 9 to 16 years old, who were inside the school premises during the clash were subsequently placed in the custody of the City Social Welfare and Development office. Six of them were released to their parents after three days.

The clash was the latest in a series of encounters that began in 2000. The latest incident, however, need not have occurred had a previous Department of Education (DepEd) recommendation urging the school's closure been enforced, according to police officers. The DepEd made its suggestion two years ago after finding the school deficient in complying with its requirements.

Expired permit

According to Benita Ong, Education Supervisor III of the DepEd in Northern Mindanao, the school's temporary permit to operate had already expired but school officials had by Tinagco and school administrator Rhapsody Dacudao, instead to apply for recognition.

Moreover, the school has adopted a curriculum different from what the DepEd prescribes for primary and secondary instruction. "We teach subjects that are offered in Bohol, we do not follow the DepEd system," Tinagco said.

There are no Filipino subjects as there are demand and importance for students abroad. In case the students' competence, Tinagco said the passing mark at the JCF School was 90 percent for all subjects, instead of the customary 75 percent.

"We are going to raise that to 95 percent and eventually to 100 percent, and we are not going to let any student who cannot attain the 100-percent passing mark graduate," she said.

Jurisdiction issue

This high academic standard should be enough to compel the DepEd to accord permanent recognition to the JCF School, Tinagco said.

Based on a president reversal of rules, the school owner said it was the DepEd, not the JCF School, that needed to reevaluate its prescribed curriculum.

The issue of jurisdiction over schools operating in the city without licenses has remained muddled. Police officials say the school has operated for two years even after being ordered closed because they could not do anything in the absence of a clear directive from the city government.

DepEd officials say they have done their share in recommending the school's closure. The city council received a copy of one such department recommendation in 2003 and subsequently passed a resolution that same year, urging the mayor to shut down the school.

A SPRAYED guitar lies abandoned in one classroom of the JCF. JCF followers have accused police of using excessive force in a confrontation last month over cult leaders' refusal to turn over a student to her parents. The cult says violence is justified and is advocated in the Bible.

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POPE RALLIES

Front page 1

crowds of faithful for his regular Sunday address.

The Angelus had to be read by an aide and the Pope only manage to mumble a few words and raise his hand to bless the crowd but it was a symbolic show that he was still at work.

The Pope, who spent a second night in his 10th-floor ward at Rome's Gemelli hospital, was "very serene," according to Colombian Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo—one of a string of prelates who visited him Friday.

Feeling a papal appearance at his hospital window on Sunday, organizers fabricated emergency on the Pope's true condition is likely to remain largely emotional until Monday when Ravasio-Valle is due to present the next medical bulletin.

The Vatican has tried hard to calm Europe's worries about the World's health, saying he had eaten breakfast on Friday and was breathing more easily after the tracheostomy.

In a medical bulletin, the Vatican said doctors had advised the Pope not to speak for some days—a much softer take on his situation than that given by doctors who said it would be weeks before he would be able to make any speeches at all.

The Pope, who also shakes with Parkinson's disease and is racked with arthritis, has breathed off doomsayers who predicted he was close to death over the past, pointing out that many of them had died and he was still leading the Catholic Church.

But at he gets older, the Pope will take longer to recover and faces more potential complications. Medical experts said there was a significant likelihood a post-tracheostomy patient of his age and frailty could get pneumonia.

News agency Ansa said the Pope was on strong antibiotics as a precautionary measure.

But the Pope looks deeply he should continue to "look after the flock."

Deep concern

Medical experts have voiced deep concern over the prospects of a recovery from his latest test, however.

Many have pointed out that a tracheostomy patient would normally be expected to recover his voice within a week or so, but a pastoral with John Paul II's grasp of complications—the ravages of Parkinson's disease, past bouts with life-threatening conditions and his advanced age—cannot be expected to recover so rapidly.

The Vatican preparers itself for a Pope who can't speak. The Sunday's edition of the Italian daily Corriere della Sera said it had written "What have you done to me?" which the spokesperson explained as John Paul II's famous reference to losing his voice, a normal consequence of his surgery.

Another wire said "Lasciatemi, or Vorrei Non (all) essere)," a refrence to his devotion to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

He said the Pope was joking with doctors and aides and had not needed help breathing after the tracheostomy even though medical experts said a respirator was normally used after such an operation.

Modern technology and modern science spread John Paul's papacy further around the world than any other and heightened it beyond what might have been emotionally possible decades ago.

His recurrent illnesses have raised the question of whether the Pope should resign but Churchmen say he is still very much in charge and is taking all the necessary big decisions.

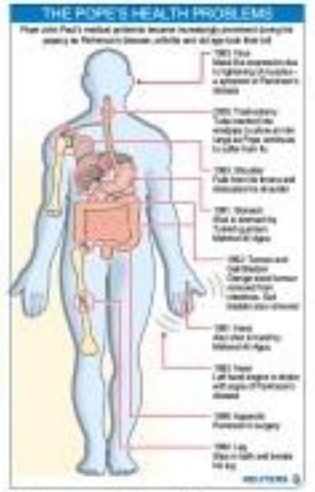
However, the prospect of a speechless Pope worried some Church officials.

FRAILTY corresponded by Parkinsons' disease makes the Pope look overdrawn whenever does with something or other as this photo's, which was taken last October at the head Mission-base of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, shows.

FIVE times Plastic City had received the Pope ecstatically. Today men look up at the main shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the Basilica of Guadalupe to pray for the health of their most distinguished and memorable visitor.

THE CANDLES burn brightly at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Shrine in Baclaran, Parañaque, as Catholics continue to pray for the Pope.

THE POPE'S HEALTH PROBLEMS



"We must now expect that he may never speak again," one said. "If we have a Pope who has to transmit his messages out on a pad, well, that's unprecedented."

Now that illness has reduced a man Pope to ruling the world's one billion Catholics by writing notes, increasing attention is focusing on those with considerable access to him—his personal secretary Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz and his secretary of state Cardinal Angelo Sodano, two members of a tight circle of close papal collaborators.

"The Holy Father has to increasingly trust the counsel and suggestions of a small group of collaborators, often giving his personal appointed as he increasingly relies on a few people close and perhaps closer to a really different constituency," one unidentified cardinal is quoted in Saturday's La Repubblica as saying.

"In some cases, we no longer know precisely what the source is for certain decisions." AFP dispatch

Cockpit is first . . .

Front page 1

structure in the municipal or a house or a school—but a cockpit.

A cockpit (cockpit) is being constructed, right in the middle of the barrio village of Poblacion, where at least 60 people, most of them children, died in the series of landslides in November and December last year.

Dingalan Councilor Shirly Diaz said the reconstruction of the cockpit was intended to encourage residents to return to the area.

The galvanized iron roof of the town's slaughterhouse, which was destroyed by the landslides, had been lent to Dingalan and was now being used as the center of the cockpit in Patok Malaweb, Tanay said.

She added that lumber was obtained from shifting logs and were same in the cockpit's construction.

Tanay, reached by phone on Friday, said construction work had begun for at least 12 houses in Barangay Cangmahan. At least 150 houses would be built on a 15-hectare property there with the assistance of United Dalingap.

Rushed for March 9 derby

Landslides took 101 lives and injured 304 people in Dingalan, according to a report from the municipal disaster coordinating council. Damage to public infrastructure, private properties, crops, livestock and fisheries reached P134.47 million.

As workers rushed to put the finishing touches to the arena in time for the March 9 derby, Tanay said not a single house for the 1,000 families left homeless by the series of landslides had been completed.

"Wood has been abundant because logs were shifting in the rivers and the creeks. While the rehabilitation of riverbeds is taking long, the construction of the arena went very fast and a lot of energy and attention were put into it by some local officials," Tanay said in a telephone interview with Dingalan on Friday.

Shocked

The cockpit, she said, would encourage people to gamble. Scant personal resources would be squeezed on gambling, instead of going there to restore farms and other enterprises, she added.

Gen. Rodolfor Angara Castillo, in a separate interview, said she was "shocked" that a cockpit was the first structure to rise in Dingalan.

While the cockpit was privately owned and the municipal council granted it a permit to operate in 1998, a local government official had been assisting in its construction, Tanay said.

Slaughterhouse roof

The mayor confirmed that Tanay ran owned the cockpit. He said he was guilt he said (we) aren't) that the slaughterhouse's roof had been transferred to the cockpit.

Wanda said he ordered the men to remove the roof. In the latter, he said Tanay said "old stocks" that were in the council compound before the landslides hit the festival Nov. 23 last year.

Asked why he allowed such fighting to resume until a disaster and why rehabilitation work was so slow, Wanda said the municipal government had been busy trying to bring in investment projects.

Logs relieved

Logs washed down by the floods and landslides that had gotten stuck along the rivers and other inland tributaries were supposed to be removed by the municipal government.

Logs that thwarted the route on the Bicol, in Orion were supposed to be gathered by the government Natural Resources Development Corp. through its contractor, the Rambo contract.

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Telco makes smart move in schools

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

STUDENTS (inset) surf the world wide web at the MALABON National High School (above), which has become the first beneficiary of a project of Smart to provide free Internet access to public schools. At right, Education Secretary Florencio Abad (center) witnesses the deed of donation from Smart public affairs head Mon Isberto during ceremonies on campus. Also in photo are Smart lobbyist Ricky Sandoval, Isabela Cua and principal Rosa Cosmos. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

THE NOT too Malabon National High School (MNHS) student Elna Iris Mutia needs to surf the Internet to do research, she would not have to go far.

At the heart of their school is a modern Batangas Bulilan Mutia is a learning center for teachers with 10 computer units, each with Internet connection.

Even better, Ms. Mutia will no longer have to spend her own money Internet access to free thanks to giant communications and cellphone companies.

"We used to rely [mainly] on books for our lessons. We had no additional resources. Because we are just classified [as] rural, [no] Internet connection," Ms. Mutia said.

More than two weeks ago, the school received new computers from the Smart Communications Inc. (The Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company gave them Internet access for schools.

Smart converted two classrooms into the learning center complete with new tables and stools. Air-conditioners would be installed later.

First up

The MNHS is the first on Inquirer part of the smart schools Program (SSP), a private sector initiative to promote information and communications technology by putting up Internet-based learning resource centers for teachers in selected public schools in the country.

"All over the world, education institutions are going online. If we don't [open] up our eyes of here to use the Internet as an educational resource, the future will be big behind," Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto told the lawmen.

During the project launch, Education Secretary Florencio Abad stressed how the quality of education in the country has fallen in the last 20 years. Technology may be one way to reverse the trend, he said.

Internet connection in public schools would, among others, speed up communication between the department and readers, Abad said.

Through e-mail, e-groups or even video conferencing, officials could talk to teachers even in the remotest barangays.

Abad pointed out that the Department of Education had to communicate regularly with about 500,000 teachers. Communicating with them the traditional way was very costly.

Abad also told the Internet he set, "With the Internet, we can learn institute schools in the old session system."

But right now, only 10 percent of public schools in the country have Internet connection. Thus, private sector initiatives is much welcomed, and badly needed.

The SSP has three components: access, content and training.

Access means free Internet connection for the schools with Internet tablet to selected Internet students teachers can visit for their lessons. There is a plan to start an online community where teachers can exchange lessons materials.

The content teachers benefit from the program, they would have to learn to use the Indonesia-ap World basket Microsoft would train teachers from participating schools.

For the pilot school, Microsoft conducted a seminar for 18 MNHS teachers, including this Mutia, last month. They, in turn, would train their fellow teachers.

MNHS students—even those whose classrooms become the learning center—might have a long wait if they are hoping to use the brand new computers to surf the Internet.

"These facilities are really for teachers. We were told by the experts, if we have limited resources, we should start first with the teachers," Isberto said.

But students can expect more informed lessons and up-to-date information from their soon-to-be Internet-savvy teachers.

"Helping one teacher in using the Internet [we] benefit many [classes]. There is a ripple effect," Smart president Napoleon Nazareno said in a speech during the launch that is. Isberto read for him.

The MNHS has 140 teachers and a student population of about 6,000.

MNHS senior Lalaine, 16, said she and her friends had been using the Internet to do research for their projects. Internet shops outside the school charge ₱20 per hour.

"We can also do research using books in the library [but it is much easier to use] the Internet," she said.

Will the Internet hasten the demise of the habit of reading among the youth?

"Frequently used, the Internet can only emphasize or strengthen the habit of reading. Information published in electronic form is much more dynamic than publication of books," Isberto said.

Compared to books, Isberto said, information from the Internet was more updated.

But he conceded that Internet use could be abused. Students and even teachers would have to be protected from or prevented from accessing not-so-good sites.

The schools would have to set the guidelines and the program would help address those concerns, he said.

The Smart schools project is an initiative of the Philippine Business for Social Progress, which selects participating schools through its regional offices.

Poor but deserving

"We give premium to poor but deserving schools," Isberto said.

He said the program would also be implemented at the Lupo de Vega National High School in the mountains of Northern Samar.

"The community is poor but that school is number one in the entire country in the national achievement test," Isberto said.

Performance is an important criteria, but for a school to be chosen, it also has to prove it can sustain the project even after the free Internet connection ends after a year.

"We ask them to develop a sustainability plan. They can turn this [learning center] into a set of Internet cafe [when the free connection expires], make it available to the public or to other students to generate revenues," Isberto said.

School heads of the MNHS said the lessons they were already moving with the parents and teacher's association to draw up a sustainability plan.

Smart hopes to implement the program in at least 50 schools nationwide.

Aside from the MNHS, the pilot school in Luzon, the program is also being launched at the Silliman University High School in Dumaguete, Center for Lapu-Lapu City in Cebu and the Jolo National High School in Sulu.

A wounded hero rises from among bombing victims

By DJ Yap

KNOWN by neighbors as a Good Samaritan, Tabernilla is shown in these photos by the Agence France Press helping taken victims of the Valentine's Day bombing in Makati City. AGENCE FRANCE PRESS

THE AFTERMATH of terror is a messy sight of disaster.

Apolinar Tabernilla passed close by on Valentine's Day when, in a spasm of other victims of the Makati blast, he was a hero.

The 45-year-old victim is shirtless man missing three wounded, but barely one thing of a big strong father. Tabernilla was on a Bond Transit bus on his way home to Alabang, Muntinlupa, when the IRCE bomb front exploded.

He felt pain on his forehead and clasping in his ears. Blood trickled down his face and he realized that he had been wounded by flying pieces of glass and debris from the blast. His instinct started to blur and his eyesight to worsen.

Tabernilla was one of the other passengers rushed to the van. He told the others to get away from the bus because it might also explode. He led almost 10 other victims toward a loading bay to get a ride to the hospital.

Tabernilla then saw a woman —a landmark employee judging from her uniform— sitting hysterical on a gutter. Her face was all bloodied, and he knew she needed help quickly. He had no handkerchief with him, so he dashed back in the bus to get the dark from the toolbox he had left there.

Pressing the cloth to the woman's bleeding face, he took her to his side and told her everything was going to be all right. They were able to cross the road to board a jeepney when Tabernilla saw another badly injured woman.

"She screamed in shock. She just refused to move," he said, speaking in Filipino. He carried his co-workers to help them, but no one moved.

"There were many people around, but no one helped us. I had to take the other woman in my other arm," he said. The police were too busy helping the injured passengers of the IRCE bus to take notice of them, he said.

With the two women in each side, he managed to board a jeepney with a few other blast victims. The empathetic driver took care took at them and drove them to the Makati Medical Center.

From there, Tabernilla still held the women until the hospital workers helped them to the stretchers and took them to the emergency room. He waved away the nurses who wanted to take a look at him and told them to send to the women first. His wounds could wait, he told them.

When he was finally being treated for his injuries, Tabernilla kept turning to his side whenever the TV cameras panned to him. He didn't want his family to worry about him.

Tabernilla had not noticed that photographers already captured scenes of him assisting the women from the journey to the hospital. In one photo, he is seen assisting a bloodied woman in a jeepney.

In another photo, he is shown helping another victim, in both photos, blood was running down Tabernilla's forehead.

The series of photos was taken by the wire agencies, Agence France Presse and Associated Press. The incident tracked down Tabernilla and his story through the pictures.

A native of Pila, Laguna, Tabernilla is the father of two daughters and two sons, and the husband of Delia Ordiz.

Though his family receives on his meager earnings from commercial fishing installation projects, he manages to send his children—from ages 21 to 11—to school.

He owns a place in SP Site, near the resort in Alabang, where he stays on weekdays between jobs, and goes home to Laguna every weekend.

Tabernilla said he should not be called a hero because what he did was small compared to the help given by the hospitals and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, which had handed his and the other victims' medical fees.

Still, his eldest daughter Lenlen is very proud of her father.

A self-described "Daddy's girl," Lenlenlyn said she couldn't help but cry when Tabernilla told her of what had happened. "Why didn't you take care [of] your self?" she remembered scolding him afterward.

But Lenlenlyn said she was not surprised to learn about how her father helped the women.

"People always turn to him for help, and he never refuses them," she said.

"He's a good person."

QC gas blast hurts 5

By Tina G. Santos

DOZENS OF LOOSE pipes are believed to be the culprit in the gas explosion that hurt five people yesterday morning in a culinary school in Quezon City.

Police identified those hurt as Jacky Dolino Dimaculangan, 20; Lenny Ann Cuilla, 20; Antonette Malapitan Tiong, 20; Elsador Quirad, 19; and Angeline Venada, 23.

In a statement, the Center for Culinary Arts (CCA) said the blast occurred at 10:30 a.m. in one of the buildings in their store Gateway Building on Kalayaan Avenue.

It said no one was seriously hurt in the incident that CCA officials suspended classes momentarily. Monday to enable safety checks on its facilities. Classes would resume as soon as fire officials give their clearance.

No eligibility short cuts for cagers–Eala

By Jane Navarro

A DUAL citizenship is certainly not a ticket for eligibility for foreign-born players in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Commissioner Noli Eala made this stand after some players applied for dual citizenship in a bid to go around the new eligibility rules imposed by the league on foreign-born Filipino cagers.

"We could probably consider a dual citizenship in the future but for now, the players should comply with the eligibility requirements that the PBA's board has approved," said Eala.

"It's basically the same documents they had submitted before, so I don't see any problem with respect to completing the requirements."

At least 21 foreign-born players are required on Sunday's the PBA conference) copies of their birth certificates, parents' marriage contract and birth certificates, among others, aside from recognition and confirmation documents from the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation and the Department of Justice.

Apart from these documents, the players should also submit the authentication papers of their parents and natural children or at least three individuals attesting to their claim to Philippine citizenship.

With the Southwood Conference set to open on March 6, the foreign-born players have less than a week left to comply with the new documentary requirements for eligibility.

Failure to do so will force the PBA to indefinitely suspend these foreign-based cagers until they submit the additional citizenship papers required by the league's board.

The players, who applied for dual citizenship with the BID, have refused to come out for the open, pending the result of their application.

Eala said the board will meet on Monday to tackle the issue and other league concerns.

"Unless the [PBA] board extends the March 3 deadline, we will push through with what has already been deliberated," said Eala.

As of yesterday, no one among the 21 foreign-bred players have completed the new set of eligibility guidelines.

The players who were asked to submit to the guidelines are Cecil Cola's Rafi Reavis, Bob Wainwright, Jules Arpon and Ali Peek; Ney Castillo and Mike Hodnett of Purefoods; Shell's Chris Jackson and Eldard Ferreria; Harvee Carey and Jimboy Alapag of Talk 'N' Text.

Alaska's Brandon Cobbley, Kenny Thon, Bob Dent, Mike Cortez and Bob Johnson; Sta. Bolinao, Danny Dolph and Cayetano Berka of San Miguel Beer; and Barangay Ginebra's Jayjay Helterbrand, Eric Menk and Andy Seigle.

In the absence of their parents' marriage contract, the players should either secure a legal recognition from one of their parents or a proof of filiation, including DNA test results.

The same set of documentary requirements will also be applied to foreign born rookie applicants seeking to join the Aug. 7 PBA draft and players who were earlier suspended by the league based on a Justice department ruling that they faked their citizenship.

ALAPAC

CASTILLO

ARIZIO

Boysen Cup loop gets going today

SIX teams, led by the Philippine Chinese Friendship Basketball League (PCFBL), squad, are featured in the opening of the Boysen Paints Cup of the PCFBL-Jaya basketball tournament today at the Tandang Sora in Quezon.

PCFBL-Jaya honorary Builders and Development Corp. right after the opening ceremonies scheduled at 10 a.m., while Marsteel Construction and Development Corp. tackles Pacific Paints Boysen/Philippines Inc. at 12 noon.

The Old Lipata Sobrevia Pilmico/Feed Mixers and Total International Corp. is set at 1:30 p.m.

Other teams entered in the two-month long tournament, which aims to foster camaraderie among employees of the participating firms and among members of the construction business community are Alpha 7 Trader Inc., Chester Chemical and Coating Corp., and BSF Durian ta/ Techwell Systems Corp.

Jimi Lim, president of the PCFBL, will deliver the keynote address during the opening rites.

After the one-round eliminations, the two top teams automatically advance to the semifinals with a twice-to-beat edge.

In the semis, the No. 1 team plays the winner of the knockout game between No. 3 and No. 6 squads, while the No. 2 qualifier meets the survivor of the No. 4 and No. 5 bracketed clash.

The semifinal survivors move into the winner-take-all title match.

Reyes taking time on case of ace guards

FILIPINO team coach Chot Reyes is squirming over the status of ace but injured teammates Rikko Cortez, Mario Milles and Jeejee Hernandez.

Still all three key guards will sit out key with different injuries, Reyes – who plans to use women for final 10 players on March 1 or the PBA Fiesta – is taking his time before sitting down with his high-powered coaching staff to "talk about it."

Helterbrand, Cardoso's top playmaker fractured a leg in Game 5 of the PBA Philippine Cup semifinals and could be out for at least four more weeks.

Milles, the second pleasing Talk 'N Text guard, sprained a heavy Game 2 against the Kings and the swelling could take at least another weeks to subside.

Cortez, on the other hand, commended his back during pre-game warmups with the Alaska fans and appeared the team what he promised to join the scrimmage with his teammates.

Miller and Cortez, unlike Helterbrand, have been showing up, however, in the SFxtening pool's morning workouts at the Moro Lorenzo Sports Center on the Roxas campus.

"Going into two week of a problem because he has already attended practice for about a week, while Miller has been out up to daily," said Reyes. "We will be taking that into consideration. We're not going to make the injury an excuse for them not to get in if is our evaluation, they do not to be in."

Reyes, who is preparing the 10 men for the Asian Basketball Confederation journey to Qatar this year will be scattering with former SFxAstro's arrow coaches Norman Black, Tim Cone and Joseng Cadeza – his close friendship – as well as with assistants Bicky Soria and Alvin Castro, by week's end.

Seeing physically present during the sessions is the hunt for coach Ato Miller said.

Cortez's back strain is not the serious, however. "The doctor said I just had to rest it for about a week, then I'm OK," he said.

Alternating at the point guard spot during the workouts are Jimmy Alapag, Helterbrand's backcourt partner Mark Cagurio, Purefoods' boy Castillo, Shell's Ronnie Rosales, and rhetoric LA Tenorio, one of four rookies on the roster of aspirants.

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2005
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Sunday BIZ

JESUITS' LEADERSHIP SECRETS

Learning from old masters

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

WHAT can a 450-year-old brainchild of priests organized by St. Ignatius Loyola teach 21st century corporations struggling to survive amid white-hot competition in the marketplace?

A lot, according to 58-year old Chris Lowney, author of the best-selling book, "Heroic Leadership."

He was in the country recently for a series of discussions on his book, subtitled, "Best Practices From A 450-Year-Old Company That Changed The World."

Lowney told business that issues faced by companies today—finding the right niche, making do with little capital, adapting quickly to change, getting the right people, navigating through peaks and valleys, dealing with crises—were the same ones that confronted the Jesuit order as it grew from its beginnings as a loose association of 10 students from the University of Paris.

That the Jesuit order still exists today to become arguably the biggest organized group of priests in the Roman Catholic Church—with 21,000 professed clergy—says that the Jesuit order did many things right.

Over the centuries, it made the proper decisions, and had the right qualities, for it to have overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Early masters

Lowney said companies today could learn from those moves, and aspire for the same qualities, if they hope to survive.

At Lowney and John's book, if companies do like Chris, philosopher Ricardo Manliclan—all of The Prism firm; and professional basketball coaches can be hailed as leadership gurus, who see the future.

While what is called leadership gains discussion about what leaders do, the Jesuits taught about what leaders are, or ought to be.

According to the Jesuits, every person in the organization is a potential leader and he feels all the time.

There is no one great man to lead all the others, Lowney said. Rather, everyone has influence, and everyone projects influence—good or bad, large or small, all the time.

"Leadership is influencing others, everyone one person. Therefore parents, teachers and colleagues are all leaders. Leadership is defined not by the scale of the opportunity but by the quality of the response," he said.

The Jesuits also espoused the idea that leadership springs from within the person, a product of his personal vision.

It is that personal vision that makes an employee contribute willingly to the fulfillment of the company's vision.

"Company mission statements don't take root simply because they've been eloquently penciled. They take root when subordinates see managers take a personal interest in the mission," he said.

Another Jesuit belief is that leadership is not an act, but a way of living.

This means that leadership comes naturally, and it provides an individual the moral compass to guide him through changing winds of company fortune.

"By knowing what [a leader] valued and wanted to achieve, he oriented himself to new circumstances, adapting confidently to unfamiliar circumstances," he said.

The last major Jesuit contribution to leadership studies is the tenet that being a leader is an ongoing process that demands intimate self-awareness and training.

"The external environment evolves and personal circumstances change, as do personal priorities," he said. "All these changes demand consistent balanced growth and revalorization as a leader."

The Jesuits profited from these beliefs. So can today's captains of industry.

Lowney said the need to bring out the right leadership skills in corporations has never been more felt as today, when the business world is "adrift offshelfs" and under increasing pressure to bring out the best in their people to pull the company forward.

For Lowney, success in corporate—whether in the secular or religious world—rests firmly on the ability of leaders to get individual people to do their best for the collective good.

The Jesuits demonstrated this, even as early as the 16th century, the model of a company surviving on the strength of just one leader does not work, for the long term.

"What has always made companies successful is individual people belonging to the workplace values that do not necessarily have anything to do with the trade, such as passion and being trustworthy. Those are the personal traits that drive success," Lowney said.

Drawing parallels

The striking parallels between the struggles of the early Jesuits and today's giant corporations closely dawned on Lowney when he left the "company" of the Jesuits, after seven years as a novitiate and a teacher in Jesuit institutions, for JP Morgan, another successful company, albeit from a different world.

Through the 17 years that he went up the ranks to hold senior positions in New York, Tokyo, Singapore and London, he realized that JP Morgan struggled with one fundamental issue: How to elicit leadership from teams scattered across the globe to emerge a winner in the highly competitive investment banking industry.

Leadership, he learned, was in such short supply. A company rigged as the most admired banking firm by Fortune magazine was no exception.

There were those who moved up on raw talent and sheer ambition, but failed spectacularly when faced with having to make major, make-or-break decisions. And there were others who were uncomfortable with change and dared not move out of their comfort zone.

Change, unfortunately, was part of the banking industry, and failure to adapt means certain death.

Lowney said that by the time he left JP Morgan, every one of the 18 largest US banks had been through a transforming merger.

LOWNEY, 83

LOWNEY says an "epiphany" inspiration to write his best-selling book.

FIRST ACADEMY OF COMPUTER ARTS

Pinoys hit paydirt with pop, animé art

TEENIE Bonjay Bonagua is a rookie through and through.

He enrolled at the First Academy of Computer Arts against the wishes of his father, a worker overseas.

Bonagua asked the school to allow him to pay a daily rate so he could finish his digital arts program.

Now Bonagua is earning more than his father who is still working it out abroad.

Bonagua also has a free hand in picking his employers—something he could never imagine even in his wildest dreams.

Bonagua is just one of many digital artists who found a foothold career in the field of animation.

The First Academy of Computer Arts was established in 2000 to give Pinoys the edge they need to capture the attention of international clients in search of world-class service.

One such artist is Bing Ignacio, 36, who is newly retired from his salesman job in Makati.

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ABOVE, a 3D model of a Lamborghini Diablo, as drawn by Carrie Yap. 23...At right, Alyssa Vargas, 17, came up with this artwork of a female Japanese warrior. At far right, Diana Andrada, 19...developed this battle android with flair.

Ignacio knows that retired professionals tend to lead ordinary lives. Yet he refuses to accept that he is not that young anymore. He still acts like a teenager.

After a few thousand pesos, he went to the Makati office of First Academy of Computer Arts to try his hand at digital arts.

He was introduced to the wonderful world of multimedia arts, 2D and 3D animation, digital photography and digital storytelling and filmmaking.

He learned the principles behind anti-learning, raised plants without leaving the comforts of the computer room and got to know the likes of various Japanese animé and demitasse cartoon characters while mastering the tricks of digital arm manipulation.

Moving to Senior after he completed the academy's digital arts program, he was commissioned to build and maintain websites for a chain of hotels and restaurants.

Now, he is earning much, much more than what he used to make slaving as a Makati executive for several years.

First Academy pioneered in digital art education in the country.

At a time when computer and fine arts schools were still teaching students the rudiments of web hosting and traditional print arts, the academy was already introducing the latest state of the art programs in the industry.

"While there were many competitors in the arena of web development, we were the first to concentrate on digital arts and film making," said Freddie Lee, First Academy marketing consultant. "We researched extensively before offering these courses and it paid off."

Four years later, a number of schools decided to join the bandwagon. But First Academy remains total about the rest.

It prides itself as the institution with the best professors—all practitioners and acknowledged experts in their respective fields.

It boasts of a conducive learning environment with state-of-the-art facilities and applies the most effective hands-on teaching method. The professors make sure that you will leave the academy an expert even after training for three and a half months.

Classes are limited to as small as six students for better-tailored student collaboration.

First Academy has something for everyone—from an extensive, 2256-hour digital arts program that trains one to become a bona fide digital artist, to a short yet enticing 20-hour cartoon animation course or junior digital arts module that even schoolchildren will enjoy.

Most of those who enroll at the academy were drawn by the canvas of Japanese animé features and award-breaking such as "The Incredibles" and "Finding Nemo," said Emil Ibidoo, First Academy general manager.

More students prefer to dabble in 2D animations, Manga illustrator and the Japanese art programs.

The semester digital storytelling workshop and digital filmmaking training program are also popular among hobbyists and career shifters.

"Regardless of the chosen course, we make sure the techniques and approaches will fit the needs of students," Lee said. "Unlike other schools, we don't teach courses that will use help [the students] achieve their objective of mastering digital arts applications."

Enrollment rates are reasonable, and the students themselves will attest that the investment is well worth it. Enthusiasm with the passion to learn could even outwit loan payment terms.

Given the track that First Academy has made in the digital arts industry over the years, it is not surprising that it has now become the home of digital artists.

And the family keeps on growing.

Know more about the many possibilities of digital arts at the First Academy of Computer Arts.

Drop by the second floor of Investa Bldg., 6726 Paseo de Roxas corner Buendia Avenue, Makati City, or call 898 2724.

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Learning from old masters

He realized that this leadership would separate the winners from the losers.

It will be that leadership, he said, that would empower employees to take calculated risks and innovate, seek smoothly and reason and motivate colleagues.

Leadership enables firms to not only cope with change, but also cause it. Drives it.

JP Morgan is what it is—a leader in the industry—because it did what it could to bring out the leaders born among its ranks.

And one of its supposed innovations was the "360-degree feedback" mechanism, a then cutting-edge practice.

Under this system, a person was evaluated not just by his direct manager, but subordinates and peers as well, so that he would know where his strengths and weaknesses lie.

JP Morgan proudly said that it was one of the first in the industry to institute this "best practice," and was reaping dividends because of it.

It was there that Lourdes had her epiphany. Memories of his Jesuit life kicked in and he realized that the Jesuits have been practicing such feedback mechanisms, and a kind of their kind of leadership, for more than 450 years.

Perhaps other leaders will have such an epiphany too.

Agriculturist keeps busy making organic honey wine

CUBIGSAYAN, Albay—"Get noisy pays."

This was how municipal agriculturist Honorio Bagnes, 52, of Barangay Cubigsan in this town explained why he was able to produce healthy, nutritious, organic red wine from honey.

Bagnes, who has been in the honeybees-keeping business for over 20 years, said he considers running up with the honeybee wine one of his greatest—and sweetest—achievements.

He said he got the idea to produce wine from an advanced seminar and training course on honeybee culture and product development at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

The seminar-course encouraged him and his classmates to look for other products, aside from the usual honey, wax and pollen.

He did just that.

He went through different formulations, that ranged from the disgusting to the bizarre—before he came up with just the right taste.

A book, entitled, "How To Make Wine," that he borrowed from the UP Los Baños library helped him along. So did his dedication and single-minded pursuit of the best red wine from honey.

The result is an organic wine that is low-acid and highly nutritious.

It is made of honey, water used in washing the beehives (normally thrown as waste by farmers), calamansi and yeast.

The wine boasts of a very low alcohol content at only 2.5 percent, and carries no sugar, fats or cholesterol.

Just like red wine from the hills of France and Italy, honeybee red wine only tastes better as it ages.

FLORANTE Bagnes and his wines, made of honey.

He said the honeybee wine was patronized by his peers and government employees.

The wine is made in cubic and costs P280 per liter, the agriculturist said.

The wine is on the list best and most profitable product, although he has done well too with bee products.

He said keeping honeybees in the backyard is an ideal venture as it does not require much capital and ease to manage.

The bees also look for their own food, an like pigs and chickens.

Bagnes has hands-full of bee colonies in his own beehouse farm in Barangay Lamasao here.

"The best thing about honeybee products is that the demand is always high in the market," Bagnes said.

According to him, the honey, which is pop. ular in the market, costs P800 per gallon.

The wax, which comes from the beehive, is usually made into 3-to-4-ban candles that are made to order for Mister Manila houses. It costs about P1,500 a kilo.

The bee pollen, on the other hand which is usually supplied by the external honeybee (Apis cerana) and stingless bee (Trigonasapi), is the main ingredient for making medicines, especially arthritis.

Honey is the sungle other flavor for pediatric drugs, he added.

Bagnes, who also chairs the Cubigsan Multipurpose Cooperative that has 521 members, provides employment to the members by buying the wine their produce. He says it to make honey bee just.

There are other products that Bagnes believes he can produce from honeybees.

But from what he has achieved so far, he already looks forward to more investment. Michael B. Jimenez, PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

Davao chamber named best in Asia-Pacific

DAVAO CITY—The city's business chamber was voted best chamber in the Asia Pacific during a selection held in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (DCCCI) bested 25 business groups that included those from China and Japan.

In 2003, DCCCI was also named the best chamber among business groups in the country, but Philchamber's award was the first international recognition for the chamber.

Jesus Magsaysay, DCCCI executive director, said that the recognition was awarded by the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Cacci) based in New Delhi.

Cacci, composed of leading business chambers in the region, is also tasked for promoting the free trade principles of transparency, fair competition and simplicity.

Magsaysay said the DCCCI was chosen for its programs for the small and medium enterprise (SME), development, membership services, training and investment promotion and policy advocacy.

DCCCI has partnered with financing institutions to provide training and fund access to SMEs, not only those operating in the city but to other parts of Southern Mindanao as well.

Bernie Saira, former DCCCI president, once said that SMEs were the driving force behind the city's economy and that strengthening them would ensure liquidity among bigger companies.

Saira said the recognition given to DCCCI proved that the idea of helping SMEs was the correct way of strengthening the economy in a particular area.

On policy advocacy, DCCCI has been very vocal about the need for peace in Mindanao and for the government to speed up the installation of necessary infrastructures that support agriculture.

It has also been campaigning for a corruption-free government through transparency in government transactions.

Magsaysay said the chamber will continue to improve on its programs. Anthony L. Alforda, PIA Mindanao Bureau

THE SOUTH: African Boer goat outweighs its Philippine cousin.

Sultan Kudarat to turn into Boer goat central

brought from South Africa to Australia in the late 1980s are considered ideal for breeding to cross-breeders, as they are suited to the local climate.

Boer goats are also heavier at 45-60 kilos each, compared to the average goat weighing just 8-20 kilos. Boer meat contains more yield for the goat raiser.

"There is also a growing demand for goat meat, he says, due to its health benefits. Studies show that goat meat has the least calories among meats from four-legged animals.

Garcia says other countries in Asia are already into South African Boer breeding, and it is time for the Philippines to follow suit, through his company.

The first order of business was to get the right breeding stock with pure bloodlines. There are other companies that import stocks, but Garcia prides himself in using proven breeds, using a 95-million investment.

"I went to Australia and did not go through traders. I went directly to stud farm owners," explains Garcia.

This way, he can source and ascertain himself of getting only registered Boers.

"Without the certification from the Boer Goat Breeders Association of Australia, the yield and breed of your Boer goat may be suspect, and your investment may just end up with lower quality livestock," he says.

He asked respected South African Boer goat judge, Jacki Archbart, to choose the first 100 heads of Boer goats to go to the Philippines.

"It is the first in the country. It has never been done," says Garcia.

Garcia, however, is not one to run away from a challenge, thus, he set up two buildings to house the Boers and insisted on importing his own feeds and vitamin mixtures. He also decided that goat feed will come solely from grains raised in the family farm to control and monitor production.

"There are no hormones. (Everything) is natural. The grain feeds I buy we grow. I am supplemented by high protein and high energy concentrated diet," explains Garcia.

It is hard work ahead for the dedicated farmer, who once studied in his province but said home for a can and a can in the corporate world.

Garcia holds an Economics degree from De La Salle University and worked as an analyst. He once realized, however, that the heart and his calling belonged to the farm.

Thus, the economist shed his pinstripes for good and settled for the familiar feel of the leather saddle and suede boots. He never regretted the move, and neither did the family corporation.

At 28, he took over the family corporation and the young buck proceed to tinker with feed formulations and look for ways to reduce farm inputs.

In just two years, he was able to run farm operations from from P6 million to the P2 to P3 million range. Bioengineering and distillation of alternative farm structures earned the AC Group of companies valuable savings. Improving the cattle breeding formula, Garcia integrated farm operations, like raising his own major grass, likewise improved family finances.

After turning around Silahis Feed Corp. and AC Garcia Group of companies, Ben dad's legacy), Garcia is hopeful his pioneering Boer goat venture will yield the same results, which should help the local economy.

"I am currently in exploratory talks with congressmen and senators as well as governors and mayors from different provinces who want to avail of the potential of raising the Boer goats to their provinces," says Garcia in a phone conversation.

To date, there are two more of goats heard for Manila and a province in the Visayas.

The prospects of Garcia's pioneering venture are looking bright, and he may just very well achieve his dream of making Tacurong the country's Boer goat center.

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Sunday BIZ

Sultan Kudarat to turn into Boer goat central

By Ernesarath Gabriel
Contributor

VINCE Garcia, 38, has a dream. Mabe Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat, the hub of South African Boer goat production.

Garcia could have stayed with raising cards—the cornerstone of the family business in this province in southern Mindanao—but the entrepreneur in him saw better opportunities in raising goats.

Garcia reveals that goats, for instance, can be bred and sold faster than cards.

"For every case sold, you can produce five goats in five month's time. These goats can give birth to, at the least, twins and triplets," Garcia says.

"In 11 months, you can sell your first set of kids. You can recoup your investment in less than a year. The idea is to start with one Boer head and start breeding," he adds.

The Boer goats that were

(SEE PAGE B5)

ROBOTICS - the wave of the future for AMA students

One of the hallmarks of a high-value education institution is its ability and zeal to offer trailblazing courses. Recently, AMA Education System (AMAES) pioneered offering new degree programs in robotics and mechatronics in the country realizing that such are becoming highly in demand in the industrial manufacturing, operations management, and even in the medical and allied fields.

Curriculum integration

AMAES uses the curriculum integration approach in infusing students to the exciting and challenging world of "mechatronics" which involves the design of computer-controlled electro-mechanical systems; and includes robotics, automation systems, neural prosthetics, microsystems mechanical systems (MEMS), and many other leading-edge technologies.

This competitive advantage motivates students to work on robotics-related fields, which many industries here and abroad prefer. A computer science student, for example is encouraged to develop a software that would allow robots to perform specific programs or missions.

Without having to enroll in a separate program, students gain knowledge, skills and competencies in robotics or mechatronics engineering. Specifically, this means that software with laboratory time are used to give the latter exposure to robotics and mechatronics.

By the time students reach the higher year levels, they may choose to major in mechatronics engineering or pursue other fields of specialization like manufacturing engineering.

Some of the mechatronics technologies which students can gain while pursuing their IT-based courses at AMAES include the robotic vibrotics system, artificial intelligence (AI) and gaming robots during their freshman year. At their second year level they are exposed to programmable logic controllers, pneumatic technology and hydraulic technology. During their third academic year, students have electro-pneumatics and electro-hydraulics technology, vision systems and robotics and servo systems.

And for the fourth year, other subsystems are taken up. The Computer-controlled production system is already introduced, and there AMA students are all set to take on thesis and design projects.

Collective advantage

AMAES students pursuing computer science, computer engineering and other IT-based courses are already exposed to fundamental robotics concepts, theories and applications as early as their freshman year. Once they develop a higher level interest for robotics, they can pursue the degree programs in mechatronics engineering, which AMAES has pioneered in the country.

"A very important aspect of the academic training in AMA is the development of the students' creative, critical thinking and research capabilities under an IT environment," shared Harvard-trained Dr. Patrick Scanlon who serves as former Vice President for Academic Affairs of The AMA Computer University.

Worldwide standards

The AMAES has a pool of highly qualified faculty and an array of expensive, state-of-the-art, cutting-edge equipment and technological tools to meet the demands of the robotics and mechatronics programs which were developed through collaboration with Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Nan Yang Polytechnic of Singapore; and the Hiroshima National College of Technology of Japan.

Just recently, a group of AMA faculty members won the best paper in the 2004 World Robot Congress of the Federation of International Robot-Soccer Association (FIRA) held in Korea. The research was entitled "Image Processing Embedded Robotic Arm". The team was composed of AMA Profs. Nemesio Adame, Bernard Dimaisip, Joseph Fungan, and Kamalesh Hariharan.

Reaping the benefits

Ultimately, the AMA students are the main beneficiaries of such initiatives of the country's premiere and largest IT university. Having been exposed to such cutting-edge technology and high-touch-based training, during their stay in AMA makes them very competitive in the job market which demands higher and specialized skills and correspondingly commands higher pay to AMA graduates. Not surprisingly, a recent survey of its alumni showed that AMA graduates have been well-placed in so-considered IT and industrial zones such as the Silicon Valley in California, Redmont in Washington, USA, and other business/technology hotbeds such as Japan, Hongkong, and Singapore. Truly, AMA graduates are going places.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2005

Sunday LIFESTYLE

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- Travel
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The flower man is back

Recovering from a stroke, florist Tony Rodriguez says everything's coming up roses, including his health and optimism

By Cheche V. Mistal
Photos by Ruth Espiritu

"For as long as people welcome my services, I will always be around," declares Tony Rodriguez.

The well-loved florist has just returned to Manila after almost six months of recuperating in his hometown of Bacolod. Rodriguez suffered a massive stroke in August—his first, and was confined in a hospital for a whole month, the first week of which was in intensive care. The list people to speculate about his retirement. There were also rumors of an extended leave of illness.

"Salot nila, 'Tinamaan ka na naman, Nagpahinga ka ng matagal, ano?'" he relates with a laugh. "Nawala lang ako ako physically. My professional operations were while I was in the hospital, and I never received any complaints."

But more or he tries to make light of his misfortune, 2004 was decidedly trying time for the 55-year-old florist. In March last year, his warehouse was burned to the ground. He lost all his work equipment, books and references, photos albums (painstakingly he works over the years.

Anyone of a weaker spirit would have chosen to die (over). Not this man. "I didn't feel bad," he says in retrospect. "Last year was my awakening. It awakened me to the fact

The flower man is back

Photocopy C3

I had first women family."

Love from family

Upon his release from the hospital, his siblings took him home to Bacolod. For many years, long before he became a full-time florist in 1998, Rodriguez had been living alone in Manila. "Hindi naman inalagaan ko... because I was always busy," he explains. "But when I went to Bacolod, that's where I felt the love of my family. That's when I realized how much I missed one closeness."

Rodriguez is the fourth in a family of six children, she has three sisters and two brothers, all based in the provinces. "Dami nagsabing di ako nag-asawa, he says. "They really took care of me."

Still wheelchair-bound, the mild-mannered Rodriguez contends he has yet to undergo physical therapy to fully recover. Aided by a cane and with some struggle, he can stand on his own again, albeit only briefly. He still has difficulty moving his left arm, but is otherwise poised and well.

"I've just come from my doctor and my blood sugar level is okay, so is my blood pressure," he says with a sigh. It's his opinion and advice to continue "making my clients happy" that keeps him from being weighed down by his illnesses.

His ordeal, Rodriguez says, made him realize his previous follies. He used to abuse cigarettes, consuming up to one packs a day. He liked to eat—a lot—especially at night. He never exercised. "Ang pinaka-exercise ko nun magpunta nag-e-exercise ng malalim," he recalls. He slept very late, if at all.

Boundaries were constantly eating the florist's hands. There would be events and weddings from the 1st to the 31st. "Kapag Pasko iburo, same sumulusot ng mall ko. Pero nagpa," he says emphatically.

While he put heart and soul into his work, however, his health suffered. Reputed in the industry for his discipline and keen attention, he now regrets not applying the same to his health.

"I only realized how serious my condition was when my doctor in the U.S. called for a person," he remembers. "Lilabs't ko'ng anything, eh. Then wala na pala whatsoever." He has since chanded cigarettes entirely. "I crave [food] pero sinasabi ko sa sarili ko, doon ko na."

THE BEST reward of his job for him is knowing that his clients are happy. When they come back, "then that's the best achievement."

Smooth operation

Though it may have seemed like it, business didn't go on a standstill for Rodriguez. As praises his staff for keeping the shop afloat and running smoothly the past six months. "They mentioned operations. Out ko nalamin na kaya pala nila. I sees just giving directions by phone, all the while that I was in the hospital. Wala namang naguluhan, naiwan ng pasyente."

Even in his sick bed, Jayar Jongpong his doctors to allow him to personally oversee preparations for his events, but to no avail. "I missed my work!" he says emphatically.

Upon his discharge, he insisted on going to the wedding reception of one client. The client learnt to room where she saw Rodriguez in his wheelchair.

Rodriguez continued working even as he was supposed to be resting in the province. He communicated with his staff through fax, emailing sketches of floral designs back and forth. He entered the Market Mango's La

"WHEN I got sick my doctors asked why I had so flowers in my room. Eeh ko, ang hobby ko nasa puso ko."

FUCHSIA and other shades of pink are popular choices for blooms these days, says Rodriguez. For weddings, he's still quite partial to roses.

Christmas décor by phone.

As soon as he returned to Manila, Rodriguez was again back in the thick of things, one more surging up all future engagements for a wedding. "I didn't tell my suitors... Before I came back, my suitors called. They didn't want me to go back here. Ibro nakisuyo sila. Pag hindi ako nakabalik parang kalungkot kung ako."

While away, he also kept himself busy with the Bacolod flower shop run by his older twin sisters.

At this point, though, Rodriguez says he's accepted that his Manila enterprise may have to end with his retirement, whenever that time comes. The stress he was previously generating evidently even his business has chosen to concentrate on harmless designs.

"Namimiss ako na magwong bagong shop," he says of customers in the business. "Kumbinsido akong kinal' na yung shop kahap. Bumalyan ka lang 'Lo naimelihan, pag may dumating, pagbigyan mo sila. Kung magagaling ka eh may lumo sa iyo ang tao kahit di pa nila sa iyo. Ang daming sweldo. Hindi ko na muse kapa labas yun. Ang importante dito kinal, dalhad. Hindi par a pera ang pinag-usapan."

Rodriguez is kept busy by several customers, including Mikkei Ebangelista (at whom the flower shop has GLADIAN, pero GRATIS) in the lobby is set to reopen in March after its renovation.

Stellar and otherwise

Of course, there are the numerous high-profile weddings. But her his stellar portfolio includes corporate clients. Rodriguez states as his rates are quite reasonable "because I don't give quotations. I work with what the clients are willing to spend."

He clarifies that his services are not exclusive to Makati Shangri-La events. "I am do weddings anywhere." His team, in fact, devastated the stage at the recent bridal fair sponsored by the Inquirer. He even showed up in semi-clear fashion since to his schedule.

As he spends more time at home these days, he has had ample time to do research and learn about trends in the floral industry. Though giving up his work is out of the question, "Hindi na ako basta nagsusuggest ng iwalay. Pag nagpapasa na sila sa mga sa'yon, I look in the volume of work and I ask my staff if they'll be able to handle it. Pag sabi nila oo, nagsagawa ko."

Both years says he has come to fully understand the importance of personal discipline, of looking after his health.

"Habas nalwang hinaya na ang shotgun sa akin ng Diyos. Dito it ang second life. Ibang pagsigan pa 'Dyos ako ng 30-12 years more, at ibang biaya ko pa sila. I will always be here."

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POCKET gardens by flower-market merchants and interior design students will be installed around Market! Market!

Baguio's Panagbenga flower festival comes to Manila market

MARKET! Market! brings to Metro Manila Baguio's famous Panagbenga Flower Festival.

On Feb. 28 to March 6, Market! Market! showcases "Flower Expressions," to which pockets of flower gardens will be installed around the mall. Participants include the mall's store hosts, assisted by the Interior Design students of Assumption College.

Starting tomorrow, Feb. 28, there will be the exhibit, "Let it Enrich/Flower Bloom," consisting of flower-inspired works captured in film, paintings and photos by 50 artists. The show is organized by Blanche Arcilla's Artchitecting.

There will be hands-on painting sessions and lectures; plant art, terrarium-making and tray landscaping by Imogine Abella of the Philippine Horticulture Society (Feb. 28, 1 p.m.); orchids for wedding coverings by Nellie Ortiola of the Philippine Orchid Society (March 1, 1 p.m.); and the Flower Club Philippines (March 2, 1 p.m.).

There will also be an exhibit of the best floral landscapes and the special celebration of the Baguio Country Club's 100th year.

Highlight of the festival is "Panaghenga Line"—a street dancing competition, on March 5 to 6.

Guests include Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Undersecretary Cynthia Carreon, and Baguio City Mayor Bernardo Vergara.

Market! Market! is at the Bonifacio Global City a open air Monday to Thursday, from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and on Friday to Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Valentine lovefest, Puerto Princesa-style

Part I

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gutshall Nayda

The people of Palawan's capital city have made 'clean and sustainable' a way of life

PUERTO Princesa, capital of Palawan, is a city with a population of 213,000. It doesn't have factories, no smog, no squatters, only one small but many small businesses and retail stores, and no piled-up trash or litter anywhere.

To the Filipino living in other "modern" cities, Puerto Princesa is Eden on Earth. Here, people believe in their leaders who have the political will to pursue their ideals for everyone's benefit. The people of Puerto Princesa have long learned to think clean and sustainable, and made it their way of life.

No need for pink ribbons here. Instead, there is a trash bin every stop of the city's streets to prevent littering. No one ever throws trees here either that is why forests grow in the outskirts of the city intact.

A visit to Puerto (as the city is wont to be called) dispels old thoughts that, unfortunately, we are a hopeless people.

Guiding light and spearhead of all nature campaigns in the city is Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn. The city might have been dirty when he came into office 12 years ago, but he has changed that and a lot more, not wanting to compromise the environment to accommodate other projects and always seeking the cooperation of city officials and the people in general in all his endeavors.

Eco-city

His goal, he says, is to make his city the "Eco-City Center of the World." From the looks of it, he is well on the way, having won a number of environmental awards, some of them yearly, including the prestigious Global 500 Roll of Honor of the United Nations Environment Program.

Last Valentine's Day he initiated a city-wide event called "Love Affair with Nature," with everyone—young and old, professionals and students—participating in different areas in different ways, all of them with a fiesta atmosphere.

In the mangroves one on the coasts of Barangay Bancao-Bancao (mangrove town) planting event took place with some 30,000 participants. They came in groups and individually, holding a fishnet swelling in one hand and a bamboo pole in the other for digging.

The year, about 10 ha were covered, other areas will be covered in subsequent plantings. Participants made a "fashion statement" in muong and tapalas. Those with rubber boots like firemen, military personnel and Smoky parachutist there to advantage.

Eager, willing volunteers

People came and went in rapid succession. No sooner was one group out, there came another. Though they seemed to be working as a set boat, this was no rehearsed affair. No one was coerced, everyone volunteered. Some students were given credits for participating, like Phi Theta and Delta Pseudo, high-school sorority at the Palawan National School.

Laughter and excited voices rang in the air all morning (people were already there since 6 a.m.). By the time Hagedorn came to do his own planting, the sun was high, silhouetting him against the seedlings and the sea.

Right after Manila Bay, he was off to Barangay Tanabo where posts were set up along a creek defining the boundary between the forest and the rest of the community. Tree-cutting there would now be considered illegal and punishable.

In many ways, the Valentine activities helped to heighten the people's love for what was their very own. They underlined the many environmental conservation and enhancement efforts of the city government, now enjoying a reputation of being the most eco-friendly in the land.

A short tour of the city can tell a visitor a lot. Many houses are built of bamboo and coconut (tuluppan) bamboo, which make them picturesque especially set against clean yards and well-pruned trees and plants. There is much unoccupied land in the city because squatting is discouraged. Instead, would-be squatters are given houses of their own where they are responsible for constructing and figuring things. So it is not surprising to find small forest stands just off the city's center.

One also senses that while Puerto is bustling with commercial activity, there is no factory emitting toxic waste and other pollutants.

The mayor's goal: a so-complete his infrastructure program that includes better roads, sanitary landfill and hotels, as well as peace and order and education.

Tourism as money-earner

Once these are all in place, he say presents, in his city basically, he says, it will only be local tourism as the city is not yet ready for a massive tourist influx. Tourism is high on the mayor's agenda. Since he is all for a logging ban, he turns to eco-tourism as livelihood for the people: tourism and agriculture.

He has set the stage for the first. The sea, and includes fishing as it is one of the most lucrative occupations in the entire province, the positions been which have earned a reputation for quality around the country from corporations important because they provide for the people's daily sustenance. His sanitary landfill and plant-hopping projects are many measures of how environmental minded Puerto Princesa's administration is. More on them soon.

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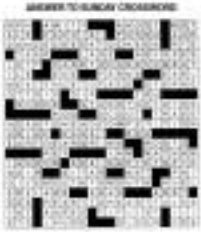
SOME of the young people who planted bakawan during Puerto Princesa's "Love Affair with Nature" on Valentine's Day came in slippers and sneakers, with backpacks and a desire to conserve nature.

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD:



GOLFING couple Bambino and Cesar Bonaventures

FLORIST Miss Ballos and daughter Mariano Tordesillas

LOVELY art patrons Cory Almagro and Marilyn Pardo

YOGA buddies Rosa Cruz and Jen Jen Ballos

CEOs Inn ex. Gigi Montinola and Charlie Ballos

SITTER artist Isabel and Gloria Diaz

Getting by with a little help from our friends

BIRTHDAY girl Malu Gamboa with Raja Laurel and Betty Jacinto

CLOSE friends Mia Padilla, Gaci Elizares and Mia Montes

VISITING relatives Tammy Elizaegui with Alex Prieto and Moises Sia

ART collectors Debbie Tan and Cicelia and Eric Recto

"LOOK Who's Talking" cast: Johnny Limon, Sea Princess and dinner Dan Dingcong de Mesias Bodoso

RIDERS in a row: Trecia Lopez, Chelo Cruz, Erica Hannes and Margo Pelo

KIDDIO family: Josh, Clarissa and Dolores Co

QUALIFYING jump of Milen Cojuangco

EXACTLY 12 years ago, during the Edsa Revolution holiday of 1995, I met Dennis, my husband-to-be, on a scuba-diving trip to Anilao, Batangas.

He used to call those trips "one-day-sex-fest" as we would head for the beach, squeeze in three or four dives and drive back late in the evening. Today such an exhausting excursion is unthinkable for me with all the preparation, the food and the kids to think of.

These days it seems I don't go anywhere unless we have reservations for the night.

Working in Hong Kong for Swire Pacific, Dennis was on a business trip here when he realized it was a holiday. With his meetings cancelled, he joined us on the invitation of my cousin Jaime, Gigi Ramos. After our Dennis' diving student where she married and now she includes President GMA among her students.)

Totally more interested in the sea creatures of Anilao, I made nothing of our encounter until October that same year when somehow Cupid—or should I say Neptune—pointed his arrow at love at us and it became a full-fledged affair.

It's difficult not to get sentimental on Valentine's Day...indeed the whole month of February—which most events are usually geared for romance.

After more than 10 years of marriage, though challenges are still part of the whole entire affair but I must say, in retrospect, we have managed to always have a blast. And this is possible partially due to awesome friends who have become an intrinsic part of our lives.

Eclectic bunch

All those incredible, close friends gathered last week to celebrate the birthday party for our latest mass/yoga buddy and Cabalen food expert Malu Gamboa.

Though they are an eclectic and eccentric bunch with creative and diverse minds, we all enjoyed the food, the company, the singing and the games—all in tribute to our Malu.

As the very feisty pun-it, when it comes to close friends we are willing to do everything "above and beyond."

Food is now top priority in my party preparations. In order to make sure the food would be excellent, I had guests bring all the dishes and the wine. Potluck? Well, why not? What are friends for but to use and abuse?

Aside from Cebuko fare, Black Goat owner Elsy Jurado also brought a diminutive Coco Brass cake with zebra-striped icing and a five-watts candle for the birthday girl. After vocal toying to encourage her, she just pushed for it to blow out and gave each guest a slice.

If Malu had a personal theme song, it would be "You are the Sunshine of My Life" by Stevie Wonder. Raja Laurel sang that for us in his best, American Idol rendition.

Newly-anointed singer Patrick Gaminde sang while playing the guitar after countless dinner from his possibly future family clan.

Delightful colorist

Also last week was Luminarama, the 14th solo exhibition of delightful colorist Marivic Soliven at the Upper Lobby of the Manila Peninsula Hotel.

With her mom, Pang Bonaventura, at her side, Marivic's latest creations on canvas, plus furniture and decorative items like lamps and pillows, were viewed by mighty hordes and the rest of Manila's top CEOs.

The exhibit was a splash of color with Marivic's fields of sunflowers and bright skies. There was so much positive energy emanating from her art pieces.

At the exhibit, I was introduced to a new abstract artist who recently concluded his own art show. He asked me why I didn't grace his show and wondered why there were so many guests at the Ballos one.

Well, I must say, I was shocked—shocked!—to be accused like this. All I could say, Casablanca-like, was, "Play it again, Dino"—and perhaps I'll drop by then.

Totally exciting

One event I always make sure to attend is the totally exciting Equestria Cup, which was held this year at the Equestrian Field at the Manila Polo Club.

The sixty-kilo girl's event over, Equestria, is hosting that event for the second year. It pairs amateurs a show jumping competition and, for added thrills, a high jump contest.

FAST friends of Malu Gamboa

YOUNG lovers Chesca Carpo and Pedrick Gaminde

FAMILY affair at Polo. Siblings Buffy and Marivic Ballos with the rest of the clan

Dennis and I have always managed to have a blast, thanks to awesome people who have become an intrinsic part of our lives

FLIRTATIOUS champion Joker Arroyo and Mhot Jimenez

RAMPISTA couple Boni and Cris Reyes

PRETTY young models in Karisma outfits

YOUNG and pretty equestriennes at the Manila Polo Club

FEATURED artist Marivic Ballos and her man, Pang Bonaventura

FAMOUS friends Anton Bautista, Malu Gamboa and Kevin Pascual

A word of advice to those single, teenage boys looking for dates: before you leave, you should comb your hair and use the square brace. It was amusing to see such young, pretty girls so competitive and determined to perform perfectly in the events they were entered in.

Another lifetime and many pounds ago, I was a horse rider myself. (I hesitate to use the term equestrienne for what I was doing.) At any rate, I have an appreciation, fleeting though it may be, of the stamina and amount of concentration needed to compete in the sun.

The successful execution of several months of practice is determined in a few minutes of performance. One has to be in proper sync with the horse and overcome all sense of negativity. There is, after all, that element of danger associated with the height of the jumps.

Session Duplo's Tim Yap and I hosted the games in between the runs to entertain the spectators. The crowd was double that of last year's. Tim and I asked random friends easy trivia questions and with Karisma, all of whom now sure sweat bags and pillows.

The highlight of the day, though, was the Panasonic, the high jump competition. Several riders had qualified to try and beat the 1979 record of 1.64 meters held by Steven Vinuya.

The tension-filled polo field awaited the jumpers as they crouched—like 7-Nate high stroll. After several unsuccessful attempts, only two remaining riders were left.

Incredibly both Asian Olympic medalist Milen Cojuangco Jaworski and her student, Joker Arroyo Jun, the daughter of the senator (a "friend"), cleared the bar. The two now hold the record for the highest equestrian jump in the country, breaking a two-decade-old record.

Hilarious guest

Let me end with a short, shameless plug. For those missing episode of "Look Who's Talking" on ABC 5 on Wednesday (see night), we interviewed the undoubtedly straight-forward sex psychologist, Dr. Margie Holmes.

She was not only very informative but also hilarious. After the show, she gave me her book, "Life, Love, Lust," which has a whole chapter on oral sex in the penguin section.

All I can say is that even after 10 years of wedded bliss, I think both Dennis and I are still on the right track.

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HIGH-JUMP winners and Karisma owners in front of 1.74-meter wall